

S E R M O N S
O N
I M P O R T A N T S U B J E C T S.

W I T H S O M E
E S S A Y S I N P O E T R Y.

B Y
N I E L D O U G L A S,
M I N I S T E R O F T H E G O S P E L A T C U P A R I N F I F E.

*Lord, it is nothing with thee to help with them that have no power.—2 Chron. xiv. 11.
Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.—Zech. iv. 6.*

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TO THE
CONGREGATION

*With which the AUTHOR stands connected as their
PASTOR.*

My Dear Friends and Christian Brethren,

THE sacred and important relation which subsists in divine Providence betwixt us, leaves little room to hesitate to whom the following sheets should be inscribed. Besides the concern you have in them in common with all Christians, they come to you particularly recommended, as part of the ministerial labours of one whom you have called to officiate among you in holy things, and to whose ministrations you have solemnly promised to pay a due regard in the Lord. I am sensible the Discourses and Essays, with which you are here presented, labour under many inaccuracies and defects, for which it is not meant by this Address to make you responsible,—partly owing to want of talents and abilities equal to the task of writing to advantage in so polite an Age—partly from the short time which intervened betwixt the determination to publish them and their being put to Press—and likewise, through some indisposition, which made the pains and attention necessary to

transferibe and correct them not a little uneasy, and at times impracticable. This may perhaps be thought but a lame apology, and no doubt would, had they not been promised to the Public, and subscribers been impatient for their copies.—

Though I am none of those who can pretend to express much in few words, as you have sufficient access to know, yet what is suggested above will account for, and, it is hoped, in part excuse that diffusion of style of which some may complain, while, by due pains, the matter might be comprised within narrower bounds.

Notwithstanding, it is humbly hoped they may not prove unacceptable to the serious and devout, who will be pleased to favour them with a candid perusal, nor, through the Divine blessing, unprofitable. As but few of you had access to hear these Discourses from the Pulpit, being, for the most part, delivered on week-days, they come now to you recommended by the charm of novelty, no less than to the Public at large. Though the desire of seeing the place of our religious assembly decent and commodious first suggested this method of contributing thereto; yet I hope, if I at all know my own heart, I can say with sincerity, that an object much more interesting

interesting hath chiefly actuated in their publication—even your spiritual profit and edification, and that of all into whose hands they may come. That they may subserve this important end, may I not hope, nay, may not I beg, that your earnest prayers for the Divine blessing will accompany them, in which case we shall mutually rejoice.—Purchase them not out of mere compliment to your Pastor, nor let them lie by you as so much useless lumber; but peruse them with attention and candour, looking up to the great Author of all good for his concurring influence, and considering yourselves as here addressed by him. Thus an end far more noble, permanent, and interesting will be answered by their publication, than any thing the most extensive sale could otherwise serve.

I must beg leave to beseech and intreat such of you as are placed in families, and especially those who in that sphere have the souls of others committed to your care, that you would pay a particular regard to the Family-visitation Address * which was pur-

* The Address here alluded to could not be got ready, through a multiplicity of unforeseen occurrences, timely enough to have a place in this publication; yet, as the Author wishes every head of a family under his inspection provided with a copy of it, it will be published, God willing, with all convenient speed.

posely drawn up for your use. Reflecting, with regret, how very far I came short, in visitations from house to house, of that seriousness, close application to the conscience, and suitableness in addressing the different individuals of whom families are composed, I embrace this opportunity of furnishing you with a constant monitor, to remind you of some of the principal duties you, in that connexion, owe to God, and to each other; and, should you make light of these admonitions, which are tendered from a concern for your precious souls, over which I am called to watch, and a sense of that solemn account I must one day render to him who appoints me, they will, in that day, bear witness for God; and, in concurrence with your other advantages, leave you inexcusable. I however hope better things, at least with respect to some of you—even things that accompany salvation, though I thus speak.

I have only to add, That as I trust you have already received some benefit from my addresses to you from the Pulpit, which gives me no small pleasure on reflection, so I am not without hope, that what is here tendered from the Press may also afford you some benefit in your Families and Closets. That you may be still enabled to profit by
both,

both, and every other mean of religious instruction you enjoy, is and shall be, as in duty bound, my earnest desire and daily prayer. Commending you, Brethren, to God, and to the word of his grace; and this feeble attempt to promote his glory and the edification of his people, to his patronage and blessing, in which I persuade myself you cordially concur,—I remain,

Your affectionate Friend, and

Servant in the Gospel of Christ,

N. DOUGLAS.

CUPAR, Aug. 28. 1789.

THE

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THE PREFACE.

CUSTOM, which acquires in a manner the force of a law, allows the propriety of introducing a new performance into the world by a Preface. There are indeed who venture to appear without this formality, leaving their productions to stand or fall merely by their own intrinsic merit. They seem to think, with a certain noble Author*, that all dedications, prefaces, or other discourses by way of introduction to a book, is but a mean grovelling method of creeping into the world, and begging that reception which the writer dares not claim, and of which he in effect hereby owns himself unworthy. This may indeed do very well where an author has already acquired the esteem and confidence of the Public, is secure of the candid reception of whatever he may submit to their inspection, and thinks himself above the censure of individuals.

The writer of the following sheets, having no such pretensions, and conscious to himself that what is here offered to the Public, so far as he is concerned, is liable to many exceptions, and needs the indulgence of those who may favour it with a perusal, is therefore content to tread in the old path. He cannot indeed plead the trite, however just, apologies for venturing to appear in that character, yet hopes his motives may be equally justifiable and disinterested with theirs who can.

No doubt, to venture abroad into the world, in the capacity of an Author, with any hope of success, in an Age of so much refinement, when men of the most e-

* Lord Shaftsbury.

minent talents and correct taste have wrote on almost every subject, may indeed seem to argue no small degree of confidence in one's own abilities. Indeed, did the success and utility of discourses on religious topics depend chiefly on the display of such talents, from every attempt of this nature such confidence might be justly inferred. When we reflect, however, that the principal advantages to be reaped from such productions must proceed from a very different quarter, a person who is firmly persuaded in his own mind, that what he intends for public use is agreeable to the word of God, and, of consequence, interesting in its nature and tendency to the most important interests of his fellow-men, may hope for a favourable reception with the candid and pious, whose regard alone is worthy to be coveted, though he be at the same time fully sensible that his talents are far from being considerable. The Author of these Sermons and Essays is not indeed so vain as to think that many inaccuracies and defects may not have escaped his notice, after all the pains bestowed upon them, yet hopes they are of such a nature as not to hurt the edification of the candid and intelligent; nor is he so blind as not to see, on revision, some things that might be altered for the better; and, therefore, will not be surprised should they occur to others. But should He, who can ordain strength and perfect praise even from the mouths of babes and sucklings, deign so far to own this imperfect and first attempt as to make it subservient to his own glory, in the comfort and edification of any of his people, which is the writer's earnest desire, this will impart a more real and sensible pleasure than all the remarks that may be made to their disadvantage can give pain. If these are made with candour, they shall be always gratefully

ly received; for the person who makes free to point out our faults, in order that we may see and amend them, acts a better and more friendly part than he who commends in gross. It may be observed, that those who are most capable to discern defects and inaccuracies are, in general, the readiest to excuse them. Little minds, like the fly on the edifice, will find many inequalities in particular parts, which a more cultivated and enlarged understanding will either candidly overlook, or view as the marks and effects of human imperfection, not wholly avoidable.

To such as may object—Why thus trouble the Public, when the world is already possessed of more books of that sort, and these too the most excellent in their kind, than men can find money to purchase, or time to peruse? the Author only replies, That every person who occupies a public sphere in society may be supposed to have a number of acquaintance and well-wishers, who will be induced, on that very account, to peruse whatever he may publish, while they would perhaps give themselves no manner of trouble to procure or read the productions of a much more eminent pen. Did all possess the most shining talents, and excel in the same way, there would be no room for that diversity of gifts which is wisely adapted to the different tastes and capacities of men, and which, like the various members of the human frame, forms a beautiful and consistent whole. In this respect, as the Apostle expresses it, “The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor the head to the feet, I have no need of you.” He who receives but one talent is under the same obligation to lay it out for the honour of his divine Master and the good of his fellow-servants, as he
who

who receives five, and, if so occupied, will at his coming obtain his approbation in the very same terms.

Knowing that the gospel is intended for the poor and illiterate, as well as for those who enjoy superior advantages, plainness and simplicity have been studied throughout, without giving, at the same time, just ground of disgust to persons of a more refined taste and enlarged education, should any such favour it with a perusal. The Author is well aware, that the Discourses here exhibited to the Public are far from being formed on what is now deemed models of elegant sermons, nor is it indeed his ambition to excel in that way, though he were to possess the talent. As a tool may be so polished as to lose its edge, so a sermon may be so elaborate and refined as to fail of its desired effect with the bulk of readers. The person who would study to make the sacred oracles his guide, in point of sentiment and mode of expression, may expect to be accounted weak, if not blind and enthusiastic, by such as pay more regard to the beauties and ornaments of language and composition, than to the matter; as also by those who will no farther credit the dictates of that unerring rule, than they comport with their own preconceived opinions, in which case their faith rests not in the wisdom of God, but in the strength and discernment of their own reason and understanding; and he is unworthy of the Christian name, who cannot bear the imputation of weakness or folly, for the sake of Christ and his gospel, from persons of that complexion. If the leading sentiments here espoused and illustrated correspond with the oracles of truth, though they should not happen to be always so happily expressed

pressed, or placed in so clear and convincing a light as could be wished, he deems it a small matter to be judged of man, who himself is liable to err: if not, no apology whatever can justify their publication. But should what is here offered to the Public, not tend to promote the interests of true and undefiled religion, as delineated in the scriptures, it would deserve no encouragement, though its pretensions in other respects were far superior to what they really are. As the gospel of the grace of God, though the treasure and vehicle of heavenly Wisdom, appears so only to some,—while, as of old, by far the greater part deem it foolishness; so it can be no real disparagement to a treatise, intended to illustrate and enforce its sacred doctrines and precepts, providing it is in any measure calculated for that end, should it meet with the same fate.—Some late bold attempts to introduce and disseminate errors of a most dangerous kind, and the countenance these receive from many of whom other things might be expected, have led to a number of remarks in transcribing these Sermons, which were not delivered from the Pulpit. The lukewarm and rational professor, who deems the belief of divine truths no way essential to Christian practice, or the acceptance of our religious services, may perhaps condemn these, or the freedom with which they are made; but, if they are just and founded on the unerring rule of faith and morals, the censures of such need not move him, with regard to what the great Lord of all will at length, in the most public manner, approve.

In perusing these Discourses, the Reader will probably remark, what hath occurred to the Author in revising them, that the same ideas sometimes recur

with very little addition or variation in the expression. This may be partly accounted for in their being composed at some distance of time from each other; nor indeed does he think it necessary to be very scrupulous on that head, as the sacred writers abound with examples of a similar nature. They may perhaps be thought too long, and of this, it must be owned, there is some room to complain; but every reader has it in his power to make them as short as he pleaseth.

With regard to the Essays which are here subjoined, they are a few selected from what the Author wrote at a leisure hour, merely for his own private amusement. It is with that diffidence and respect which are due to the judgment of the Public, that he ventures to appear in that capacity; yet fondly hopes, that what is submitted to their inspection, with a view to edify the serious and well-disposed, and promote an object of general utility, will, upon the whole, notwithstanding any defects it may labour under, meet with candour and indulgence, though it should fail of pleasing and amusing the more nice and curious. Had it been his object to secure the applause of the learned and polite, however much he might value their just approbation, these Essays would probably never have seen the light; but the importance of the subjects will, it is hoped, recommend them to those who love truth for its own sake, though the exterior garb it here assumes should fail of pleasing such as seek pleasure and amusement rather than real edification from what they peruse. Though many things will occur either deficient or redundant, many harsh and unharmonious, or destitute of the ornaments of language to make the sentiment shine; yet

yet he would fain hope, that those who lay aside the fullen air of criticism, assume the Friend, and peruse with a sincere desire to be pleased and edified, will not carry away disgust and aversion.—When the Muse, which ought ever to be the guardian of Religion and Morality, is, by a base prostitution, perverted to abet the already too-prevalent cause of vice and infidelity, and when productions, the evident tendency of which is to blow up the latent sparks of iniquity, and bring Religion, with all her venerable rites, into disrepute, meet the warmest encouragement of a licentious Age, may it not be hoped, that, when her object is to promote the love and practice of goodness and piety, her each attempt, though deficient in point of poetic merit, will yet not fail to insure the approbation of the friends of Jesus, of virtue and of man?

Not to detain the Reader any longer, the Author has nothing farther to add, by way of Preface, but his ardent wishes that a Divine blessing may accompany every perusal of the following sheets, so as to render them subservient to the Redeemer's glory, and the salvation of precious souls, which is the hearty desire and prayer of his

Sincere Friend,

And humble servant in the Lord,

N. D.

THE Author's distance from the Press put it out of his power to revise the Proof-sheets. Some ERRATA have escaped,—the following are the most material, which the candid Reader will please correct, or excuse.

- Page 53. line 28. *for deprived read depraved.*
— 90. — 15. *for higest read highest.*
— 112. — 17. *for sactions read sanctions.*
— 210. — 7. *for sepulchre read sepulture.*
— 247. — 15. *for Messiah read Messiah's.*
— 236. — 22. *for the world read this world.*
— 285. — 6. *for wit ith read with it.*
— 315. — 21. *for lovely read lowly.*
— 423. — 16. *for real read reel.*
— 468. — 9. *for head read breast.*

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Reader need scarce be told, That he is here presented with upwards of 120 pages more than were promised in the Proposals, which hath considerably encreased the expence of the impression; not to mention that the paper is of a quality superior to that of the specimen given to the Public. Had there been only two or three sheets more, no compensation would have been expected; but when the addition amounts to more than a fourth part of what was promised, it is hoped this will induce Subscribers frankly to allow the small trifle of **THREEPENCE** more for their Copy, as the price must be advanced to others on this account. This, however, is submitted to their own generosity; for those concerned had rather sustain the loss than recede from what was proposed to the Public, without their own consent. They, however, flatter themselves, that, when the late advance on paper, the Printer's charge, and the size of the volume are attended to, none will scruple the above. To accommodate some, it was thought proper to throw of a number on a finer paper, which will be neatly bound in calf, without any advance on the price but what barely defrays the additional charge of the paper and binding.

10 FE60

DISCOURSES

ON

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

DISCOURSE I.

THE NATURE OF NUMBERING OUR DAYS.

PREACHED ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE YEAR.

PSALM xc. 12.

*So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our
hearts unto wisdom.*

ONE great reason why Religion is so fatally neglected, and, considering its infinite importance, so little attended to even by the best, is, our not forming a proper estimate of the present state as connected with eternity. While the invisible realities of a future world, remain intercepted by the vail of unbelief, and the clouds of ignorance, the fleeting enjoyments, and vain pursuits of this mortal life will, of course, engross all our thoughts, and exhaust all our activity. Did things unseen and eternal break in upon our minds, in all their evidence and importance, how would they annihilate the vanities of this

* A

passing

passing scene, obscure the false glare of earthly glory, divest the pleasures of sin and sense of all their fascinating charms, and render us in a great measure superior to the trials and distresses of the present state? With this important truth impressed on the mind, our fervent request to God should often be, in the language of the text, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom;"—to form such an estimate of the present and future state, in their relation to each other, as will powerfully excite to a corresponding practice. Till he turn away our eyes from beholding vanities, and quicken us in his holy way, we will chuse rather to shift from one vanity to another, than return to him as our sovereign good, who alone can satisfy the unbounded desires, and fill the vast capacities, of our immortal souls—chuse rather to run from one broken cistern to another, yea, and with unceasing application, to hew them out, even after repeated experience of the inefficacy of our toil, than have recourse to the inexhaustible fountain of living waters. May he, who alone can effectually do it, convince us of the extreme folly, guilt and danger of such a conduct; and so teach us to number and improve our passing days on earth, that we may become wise to salvation; and, when they are brought to a close, enjoy unfading bliss in the regions of immortality.

This psalm is generally allowed to have been composed by Moses, that holy man of God, whom he honoured to promulgate his law to ancient Israel, and establish the whole ritual of their religious worship. The memorable occasion, to which it probably refers, we have recorded in the book of Numbers.

bers *. By divine direction, Moses sent, from the wilderness of Paran, twelve princes of the chief families in Israel, in order to survey the promised land, and bring back a just report. Upon their return, these all, Caleb and Joshua excepted, with one consent, gave such an unfair representation of what they had seen, as greatly intimidated the people, and excited their murmurings both against the Lord and his servants. Justly provoked at their rebellious conduct, and insolent contempt of his goodness, God doomed that generation, which came out of Egypt, to wander forty years in the wilderness; and, within this period, to fall a sacrifice to death, as a punishment of that particular transgression. From this peremptory sentence, however, Joshua, Moses' illustrious successor, and Caleb, whose name is recorded with such distinguished honour in that history, were exempted. To the importunate intercession of their patriotic leader, were the children of Israel indebted for this mitigation of their punishment, and that they were not immediately consumed.

In this gloomy situation, uncertain but they might die ere to-morrow's dawn; absolutely sure they could not survive a certain determinate period, the humble and penitent among them stood much in need of comfort, under the chastisement of heaven, and friendly counsel to direct to a proper improvement of it. With a particular view, therefore, to instruct and comfort them under this awful dispensation; and, at the same time, to affect their heart with a lively and abiding sense of their guilt, as the procuring cause of it, he drew up this sublime and expres-

* Chap. xiv.

five psalm; which contains an humble acknowledgement of the justice and equity of the divine procedure in all their sufferings, in which, however great, much lenity was shown, being punished far less than their iniquity deserved; also a figurative, but animated description of, or devout meditation on the uncertainty and transient duration of human life; with an earnest prayer for grace to improve by these peculiar circumstances in their lot, and that God would yet visit them in mercy, and refresh them with his goodness. He introduces himself by acknowledging the stability of God's covenant, the eternity and immutability of his nature and perfections; and, from these, suggests ground of comfort, under a sense of human frailty, and in the prospect of these calamities to which the life of man is here exposed, and that people in particular were subjected. These he represents by a variety of beautiful and striking figures, admirably calculated to convey instruction and affect the heart. After expostulating with God, upon the awful nature of his judgments, he begins, in the passage under consideration, to supplicate his mercy, and deprecate the tokens of his displeasure.—Though we are not placed in circumstances, in all respects parallel to these in which the Jews of that generation stood; yet, with the utmost propriety, may we, at all times, but more especially on occasions of this nature, adopt the pathetic address in the text,—“So teach us, O Lord, to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

IN the farther prosecution of the subject, I shall endeavour, through Divine aid,—To shew you what may be implied in the earnest prayer of Moses, in the
text,

text, *So teach us to number our days.*—Then consider the happy influence of this exercise upon our temper and conduct, as suggested in the latter clause, *That we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.*—And subjoin some Improvement.

HERE I need scarce observe, That the prayer in the text is not to be literally understood; for, in this sense, many are very expert in reckoning up the years and days of their own past life, and that of others, who are, at the same time, exceedingly deficient in point of heavenly wisdom. We number things in order to obtain an exact account of them, and so be able to form a proper estimate of their real value and importance.—To number our days then, according to the Psalmist's request here, may imply, That we take a serious review of our past conduct in life. The whole of time, with relation to creatures, resolves itself into the past, the present, and the future. The first is already fled, not to be recalled; and the last altogether uncertain, for who can say that he shall see to-morrow's sun rise upon the earth? The present moment alone is ours, and that too is on the wing, ready to take its final flight.

But, though past days and years cannot be recalled; yet frequently to reflect upon the part we have acted in them, in order to implore the pardon of Heaven for what we may find amiss, and with sincere desire, through Divine aid, to reform it, is a piece of conduct both highly rational and unspeakably beneficial. To be able to recollect, and reflect on past actions; to anticipate futurity, and form a proper judgment with regard to both, constitutes man's pre-eminence over the inferior creatures,—whose mo-

tions and actions result from the mere instincts of nature, and laws of sensation to which they are all reducible. So far only as we exercise our powers of intelligence and reflection to this purpose, do we act up to the dignity of our rational nature, and the important ends of our existence. To imbibe certain principles, and assume a certain line of conduct, without considering their propriety, or attending to their consequences, is descriptive of the highest imprudence and folly. To banish from our minds the past incidents of life, so far as religion and conscience may be concerned, is not only exceedingly irrational in itself, but also extremely pernicious to our best interests. The want of serious consideration and reflection, hurries many upon very fatal courses, and prevents their recovery, when once engaged in them; whereas, did they maturely consider their nature and consequences, they would tremble at the awful prospect. The frequent review of our past conduct, as contrasted with that infallible rule of moral rectitude, the divine law, is necessary to the exercise of genuine repentance, and thorough amendment of life. With this view it is often recommended in scripture, both by precept and example: "Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways;" or, as the margin more emphatically renders it, "Set your hearts on your ways *." That is, seriously reflect on their evil nature, and fatal tendency, and accomplish a diligent search, like one in quest of an object he has much at heart. Agreeable to this injunction, the royal Psalmist tells us, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.

* Hag. i. 5.

"I made

"I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments*." His son Solomon mentions it as a part of the character of fools, "That they consider not that they do evil." We also find God himself complaining, by his prophet, "Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider:" which want of consideration, as appears from the connexion, seems to have paved the way for their fatal apostacy, and consequent calamities†.

The man, therefore, who numbers his days so as to apply his heart unto wisdom, will seriously reflect on his past conduct, weigh it in the balance of the sanctuary, consider the civil and religious advantages he may have enjoyed, and the solemn account he must in a little render of them. With David, he hath seen an end of all sublunary perfection; is convinced, that the honours, pleasures, and profits which originate from earth, and terminate there, however specious, are momentary and delusive; and hence prays, with the same pious Monarch, "Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes:" "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way‡." From his past experience of the deceitfulness of sin, of the unsatisfactory nature of present enjoyments, and frequent disappointment in the pursuit of them, he had learned how unworthy they were of his supreme attention and regard; and is thence brought to conclude, with the wise king of Israel, That all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Instead, therefore, of pursuing, with unremitted assiduity, and raised expectations, an airy phantom, a fleeting shadow, which hath often disappointed his

* Psal. cxix. 59. † Is. i. 3. ‡ Psal. cxix. 33-37.

fondest wishes, often eluded his most eager embrace; he is divinely taught to give the preference to these durable riches and honours, which the gospel alone exhibits,—taught to place his trust in God, as his all-sufficient and enriching portion, and confide in him as the rock of his salvation. Thus, each revolving day and year adds to his valuable acquisition of heavenly wisdom and knowledge; and his reins, his inward thoughts and meditations instruct him in the night seasons. Farther,

To number our days, according to the pious request in the text, may also imply, A due sense of the short and precarious duration of our present state of existence. That our days on earth are few and uncertain, is obvious to all, and called by none in question. To maintain, however, a proper and becoming sense of this truth habitually on the mind, is, perhaps, the attainment of very few. Hence, time and opportunities of doing and receiving good, precious and important as these must appear, when viewed in their connexion with eternity, are but too often, even by the best, permitted to pass unheaded and unimproved. These, however, once beheld in the light of divine truth, and in the faithful mirror of eternity, will appear truly interesting, yea infinitely momentous.—Let us, for a few moments, attend to the unerring verdict of holy writ on this head.

The sacred writers, in order to impress our minds with a lively sense of the brevity, transitory nature, and imbecility of human life, employ, on this subject, a variety of striking figures and metaphors, borrowed from natural objects and common occurrences, all highly descriptive of the shortness and precarious duration

duration of the present state. Human life is by them compared to a post, charged with important dispatches that require speed; to a swift vessel, sailing before a prosperous gale; to the motion of a weavers shuttle; to the rapid flight of an Eagle, when he darts upon his prey; and to the fleeting shadow, which passeth almost imperceptibly along the fields. So sudden the transition from time to eternity, it may be made in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye; and so thin the partition betwixt us and this state, it is only the breath in our nostrils, that attenuated thread, which may be cut assunder in a moment, by ten thousand casualties, not to be foreseen by human sagacity, nor prevented by human power. Hence, says the Prophet, "Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?" In what emphatic language and beautiful figures, does Job† express and enforce this too much neglected truth! Man, who is born of a woman, is of few days, and even these full of trouble. In the morning of life, he cometh forth as a flower, and is cut down, perhaps long ere it hath reached noon; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. His days are determined, the number of his months are with God; who hath appointed him his bounds, which he cannot pass. Having, as an hireling, accomplished his day, he must remove hence, and resign his place among mortals. The pale horse and his rider change his countenance, and send him away whither he shall not return; and that perhaps, when his breasts are full of milk, and his bones moistened with marrow. While active fancy

* Is. ii. 22. † Job xiv.

is busy in laying out, and anticipating her gayest scenes of earthly felicity, that fatal blow may be levelled at the root, which, at once, blasts all its future buds and blossoms. In the material world, the return of spring repairs the desolations of winter, and renews the decayed face of nature: "But man
 "dieth, and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the
 "ghost, and where is he? With regard to his body, the alone part of him which is subject to dissolution, he indeed lieth down in the gloomy silent bed of death, and riseth not till the heavens are no more; but the soul, his only conscious part, must wing its way to regions till then unknown. One generation passeth away, and another cometh, in constant succession, to supply its place, till the mighty plan of Providence is finished, and the trump of God announce the consummation of all things.—Our fathers, where are they?—the prophets, do they live for ever? Do not the clods of the valley cover them? and shall not our long abode be soon assigned us too in the same land of darkness and deep forgetfulness?—Here there is none abiding.

The inspired writer of this sacred Ode, having his mind deeply impressed with the solemn subject, breaks forth in a train of beautiful and expressive images, similar to these alluded to above;—images highly calculated to illustrate the frailty of human nature, the vanity of human conduct, and the instability of life itself, with all its fading comforts. After a sublime description of God's eternity and immutability, he proceeds to consider man's frailty and mortality, that, viewed in this contrast, we might be the more deeply affected with the vanity, yea nothingness of our present state of existence: "Before
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“ the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst
“ formed the earth and the world: even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God. Thou turnest man
“ to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of
“ men. For a thousand years in thy sight are but as
“ yesterday, when it is past, and as a watch in the
“ night.” Our measures of time are so absolutely
disproportional to God’s eternity, that they are all
lost and annihilated in his presence; as the rustling
of a leaf in a peal of thunder, or the light of a taper
in the meridian blaze. Thou carriest them away,
adds he, as with a flood; that is, suddenly, irresistibly,
and when least expected. In the ordinary course
of nature, time, like a constant stream, carries down
mankind, with incessant motion, till it turns them
over to the boundless ocean of eternity. But, as in the
case to which this psalm immediately refers, the in-
roads and ravages of death sometimes resemble a
spreading torrent, or an over-flowing deluge, which,
with irresistible impetuosity, sweeps all before it.
Human life, considered as short, vain, and uncertain,
is also here compared to sleep, a dream, to the grass,
yea, the flower of the tender grass; images all happily
chosen, and highly picturesque of its transient glories
and momentary precarious duration. When the ex-
ternal senses are all sealed in sleep, creative fancy ex-
erts her magic power, and agitates the mind with her
visionary scenes;—mean while the moments pass im-
perceptibly away, till, roused from the slumbers of
the night, the illusive phantoms vanish, and the gay
enchantment is dissolved. Thus, with many, the ly-
ing vanities of life—that ever tempting, ever cheat-
ing train, entirely engross their time and attention,
till, ere they are aware, death, that unwelcome dis-
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sturber of their security and false repose, awakes them from the pleasing revery; and, behold, it is but a deceitful dream, which leaves nothing real or substantial behind it, save only the conscious remembrance of past folly and guilt. What they once valued, as great, precious, and substantial, they now find to have been but a vain, empty shew, and their efforts to obtain it, a vexing themselves in vain. Such, therefore, as seek and expect happiness from the objects of time and sense, or from a lifeless form of godliness; their hopes, however high and flattering, will vanish at death, like the baseless fabric of a vision, and leave them to bewail their irreparable loss and disappointment. A case so melancholy and hopeless, the prophet emphatically describes, under the expressive similitude of a man, harrassed with the painful sensations of hunger and thirst, who dreams he is eating and drinking; yet, awaking from sleep, behold his soul is faint, and he hath appetite.

The royal Psalmist, having his mind wholly occupied with the same interesting subject, utters a request similar to that in the text: "Lord make me
 " to know mine end, and the measure of my days,
 " what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Be-
 " hold," adds he, " thou hast made my days as an
 " hand-breadth, and mine age is as nothing before
 " thee: verily, every man, at his best state, is alto-
 " gether vanity*." A variety of changes and vicissitudes, he himself had experienced in life: He was raised from a low condition to the highest elevation of worldly power, opulence, and grandeur. Notwithstanding, we find him pronouncing all to be but shew

* Psalm xxxix. 4. 5.

and empty pageantry, which, like an idle tale, or a well-concerted fable, may please and amuse for a little, but is soon over and forgotten. If we admit King David's testimony, with whose judgment, on this point, his wise son Solomon, who spoke from extensive observation and experience, perfectly coincides, man, in youth, health, honour, and prosperity, yea, in the happiest condition we can suppose him on earth, is wholly and altogether vanity.

But, should our passing days on earth be protracted even to seventy or eighty years, which seems, in ordinary cases, to have been the utmost extent of human life, even in Moses' time, yet how soon would they be cut off by death, and we fly away whence we should not return. Perhaps, however, not one of a thousand, born to our world, attains this period; and those who do, what is their life but labour and sorrow? Let us hear the observation of a venerable Patriarch on this topic, who lived to a much greater age, and was all his life long the peculiar charge of an indulgent providence. Jacob, now loaded with years, and crowned with honour and happiness, being introduced by his beloved son Joseph to Pharaoh, and asked, by that Monarch, the common question, "How old art thou?" made this significant reply, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years:" and adds, "few and evil have the days of the years of my life been *." Deduct from the longest life the period of childhood and youth, in which reason hath not yet attained its full maturity, and the time spent in sleep and other necessary refreshments of the body, and how small a

* Gen. xlvii. 7. 8. 9.

portion will you leave to the man and the Christian! We find the history of the antediluvian patriarchs, whose longevity bade fair for writing the epitaph of the world, comprised by the sacred historian in these few expressive terms, Such and such a one lived so many hundred years, begat sons and daughters; and he died. Death soon shifts the varied scene, and concludes the drama. The space betwixt our birth and death is considered, by the wise king of Israel, as a mere blank; for, though he mentions a time for both, as also for every other purpose under the sun, yet he speaks of no time to live. What is the longest life ever mortal enjoyed, but as a passing shadow, a vapour, which appeareth for a little time and soon vanisheth away? To a fond mind, eagerly set on the pleasures, and engrossed with the cares and pursuits of life, this might indeed appear very considerable in anticipation; but, upon a retrospect view, it dwindles almost into nothing. But why mention the present contracted span of human existence, which is bounded by the narrow limits of a few revolving years? What is time itself, which gives birth to so many succeeding generations, and important events and revolutions, even in its utmost extent, when compared to eternity, but as a grain of sand to our globe of earth, or a drop of water to the immense ocean! Can we then forbear exclaiming, Time, how short! Eternity, how long! May God deeply impress on every heart the momentous, but too much neglected truth.

Let me once more observe, That to number our days, in the sense of the Psalmist in the text, may also imply, That we consider the importance of the work assigned

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us, and its intimate connexion with our future state of existence. It is indeed owing to the fatal neglect of this, that many seem to consider the power of acquiring wealth, and rising to honour and preferment in the world, or the application necessary to procure a comfortable subsistence for themselves and connexions, as the great, if not the sole business of life. Hence, instead of making it their serious enquiry, "What shall we do to be saved? Wherewithal shall we come before the Lord, and bow ourselves before the Most High God?" the language, if not of their lips, at least of their lives, is, "Who will shew us any good? What shall we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" Our blessed and compassionate Saviour, however, who best knows our state and destination, the nature of our work, and the diligence, care, and activity requisite to the right performance of it, is of a quite different mind: He, instead of allowing these objects a rational competition, much less a decided preference, puts the weighty question, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul*?" Here the gain, though great, would be precarious and momentary; but the loss immense, and irreparable. Hence do we find our application to religion, in its life and power, enjoined in these and the like emphatic expressions, all which import its truly interesting nature, and serious consequences: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling †."—"Give diligence to make your calling and election sure ‡."—"Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to

* Mark viii. 36. † Phil. ii. 12. ‡ 2 Pet. i. 10.

“enter in, but shall not be able *.”—“Labour for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you †.”—“Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you ‡.”—All this our Lord enforces by his own example, and by this weighty consideration, that “the night cometh, when no man can work §.”

The Christian life is, in scripture, compared to a race, a fight, a warfare;—all which denote, not only the formidable enemies, and powerful opposition we must encounter, but also the diligence, zeal, and activity, necessary on our part, in order to conquer and surmount them. For what purpose are we spared from year to year, notwithstanding our fatal inattention to the momentous concerns of eternity, and continued misimprovement of the means of grace? Is it not that we may be at length brought to consider a due attention to and improvement of these as the one thing needful—the great and chief business of life; and so be led to bring forth the fruits of faith and holy obedience, that we may be found, when our divine Master cometh, occupying the talents now committed to our trust, that so our account of them may be then given in with joy, and not with grief?—While so often, and by such various means invited to work in our Lord’s vineyard, let us beware of standing all the day idle in the market-place. Our work, as Christians, is great and important, and the time allotted to perform it short and uncertain: With many of us the day is already far spent, the shadows of the evening stretching out, and the long

* Luke xiii. 24. † John vi. 27. ‡ John xii. 35.

§ John ix. 4.

night of death at hand. Sure it is then high time to lay aside every weight, and the sins which do more easily beset us, and to run the race that is set before us, relying on his grace who hath made it our duty and our interest so to do.

Short and uncertain, however, as the period of our present existence is, yet is it the only season allowed us to prepare for eternity, and secure our happiness in it. View man merely as the creature of a day, and that strange question will involve no impropriety, "Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain *?" Even an angel, if his existence was confined to the same narrow limits, would scarce deserve our notice: But eternity annexed to a very trifle, would raise it into consequence. Man, considered merely as an inhabitant of this world, and destined to act a part for a few days on the stage of life, sinks into littleness and nothing; but extend his being and prospects to a state of endless duration, and he at once appears in his native dignity and real importance. The period of our present life may, as in scripture, be justly called the days of our vanity, or our vain days; yet, when viewed as a state of preparation for eternity, they appear big with the most interesting consequences. As the seed-time to the harvest, so is this life to the next; for we are expressly assured, "That as we now sow, we shall hereafter reap," both in kind and degree †. The whole of our conduct here, like so much seed sown in the ground, though it may be now out of view and forgotten, yet will spring up in the unseen world, either to our unspeakable felicity, or to our shame and ever-

* Psalm lxxxix. 47. † Gal. vi. 7. 8.

lasting contempt. With equal reason might a man expect to reap a crop of wheat, where he hath sown only tares, as hope for future happiness in the neglect of the precepts and institutions of religion, or in the indulgence of vice and immorality. We may indeed deceive ourselves and others, but cannot impose upon that God with whom we have all to do; and who shall infallibly render to every one according to his works. They only are truly wise, who consider the present life as a state of discipline and preparation for a happy immortality; and are careful to maintain such a line of conduct, as may place their hopes of enjoying it, through the merits of the Son of God, upon a firm and solid foundation. Such as pursue different measures, and act from other ends and motives, though they may now deem themselves the only wise and happy persons, and share the favour and liberal applause of a vain blind world; yet, persisting in such courses, in a little will they be effectually convinced of their extreme folly, and infatuation, and that a deceived heart had led them astray.

Thus, the man who numbers his days to any valuable purpose, will seriously and frequently review his past conduct, in order to correct what he may find amiss, and improve in heavenly wisdom and understanding from his past folly, negligence, and inattention, with respect to his most important concerns,—extend his views to futurity, consider the shortness and uncertainty of his present state of existence, the importance of the work assigned him in it, and also its intimate connexion with his unalterable condition beyond the grave, and necessary influence upon it. He does not, like the fool in the gospel,

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gospel, count upon many days and years yet to come, form distant prospects of happiness here below, nor promise rest and satisfaction to his soul from the possession of these things that perish in the using; but, on the contrary, sensible that his life on earth is transient as a morning cloud and early dew, which soon pass away, he considers himself as standing every moment on the confines of another world, not knowing the day nor the hour of his departure thither; and is, therefore, concerned to have his loins girt about and his lamp burning, waiting, in habitual readiness, for the coming of his Lord.— Thus, may Divine grace dispose and enable one and all of us to number our days, so as to apply our hearts unto wisdom;—as to give all due diligence to secure an interest in the Son of God, by a true and saving faith, and a firm title to eternal life through his death and righteousness; attending to this, and all the precepts, duties, and ordinances of religion and evangelical obedience, as the one thing needful, the truest wisdom, and chief interest of a lapsed reasonable creature.

HAVING dwelt upon the first part of the subject much longer than at first intended, I cannot so much as enter upon the discussion of the second.— Suffice it, at present, to observe, That the exercise of numbering our days, which Moses prays in the text to be taught, would, through the Divine blessing, have a happy tendency to moderate our attachment to the enjoyments and pursuits of the present state—to alleviate the trials and afflictions of real Christians; because their days of trouble will be soon over,—a tendency to make us humble and watchful

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in every situation and circumstance of life; to make our departure hence more familiar to the mind, and less terrible in its approach; and lead us duly to prize, and diligently to improve the means of grace and salvation.—All this may be here comprised in the application of the heart unto wisdom, by which is meant, according to the frequent import of that term, real religion, felt and embraced in its life and power, as a service truly reasonable in itself, and highly beneficial in its consequences. When, under a conviction of the importance and necessity of being truly religious, we are cordially and habitually led to propose the glory and enjoyment of God as our great and chief end; and to maintain a sincere, uniform, and steady regard to all the precepts and institutions of Christianity, as the appointed means leading to this end; then, and not otherwise, may we be, justly said to apply our hearts unto wisdom,—to make religion, as it ever ought to be, our great and principal work and business in life. Such application, proceeding from a principle of spiritual life in the soul, and actuated by such ends and motives, cannot fail, through the gracious aids of approving Heaven, to have the happiest influence on the heart and life, and issue at length in the complete and eternal salvation of the whole man.

THE common concern we all have in the subject, and the occasion of our present meeting, point out the propriety of addressing you in some *practical reflections* from it, before I conclude; both which considerations will, I hope, dispose you the more readily to receive them.—The prayer of the man of God, in the text, is, at all times, and on every occasion, suitable

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able and important; but more peculiarly seasonable when brought, in divine Providence, to see the beginning of another year, and that in such comfortable circumstances; while, during the course of the preceding one, many of our fellow-creatures, and some of them, perhaps, our intimate acquaintance and connexions, have been removed to the other world, and their condition now fixed for eternity. Though the exact period and manner of our removal from this state are among these things which God hath, for reasons wise in themselves and merciful to us, put in his own power, and concealed from us, so that, in this respect, man knoweth not his time, nor may indeed pray, that he, to whom such secret things belongeth, would discover it; yet, being assured, by scripture and experience, of the general fact, it is our real interest, and truest wisdom, to live in the daily view and expectation of death, and to study to be found habitually prepared for it. Will any plead, that the circumstances in which the children of Israel were placed and ours are materially different; that they knew, from the peremptory sentence gone forth against them, that their life could not exceed the determinate space of forty years, but might, for aught known to them, come far short of it? A moment's reflection here, Brethren, may convince us, that the difference is not so material as we might at first sight imagine. Are we not all, by an irreverfible decree, appointed to death, and every moment liable thereto? To some of us this event may be near, much nearer indeed than we are aware; and from the youngest and most healthy present, it cannot be very far distant. Of all now within these walls, how few will survive the space of time above mentioned? Nay, Is it

it not more than probable, that long ere then the far greater part of us will be numbered with the nations of the dead, and have our state and character unalterably fixed? Who can tell but God may be now saying to some of us, as he did of old to Haniah, by his prophet, "This year thou shalt die *?" Does it not then concern all and each of us to enquire, with the disciples on a certain occasion, Lord, is it I? Are my days on earth so nigh a close; and the period allotted for working out my salvation so soon to terminate?—All this, my fellow-sojourners, is possible; nay, more than probable. Have not many, who seemed to bid as fair for life as any here, and might perhaps as little expect the momentous change, in the course of the by-past year resigned their place on earth,—made their exit to the world of spirits, and are now no more among mortals? May we not easily recollect such instances within the narrow circle of our own observation? Do not these serve to evince, that neither youth, strength, nor vigour of constitution, can secure the continuance of life, or fortify against the assaults of disease and death? How many are the arrows of his quiver, which fly so thick and promiscuously, that none can guess their next victim; and so unerring, that none can elude their aim? Do not events take place each revolving day, some of which we have access to witness, which loudly inculcate our Lord's admonition, "Be ye also ready; for in an hour when ye think not the Son of man cometh?" How often are we called to attend the remains of our deceased friends and fellow-men to their long home; and how soon

* Jer. xxviii. 16.

shall we too, in return, receive from others this last office of humanity? With what propriety, then, may each of us adopt the pathetic address of Moses in the text, Lord, "so teach us to number?" &c. — Our inducements to improve the day of our merciful visitation, and give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, that we may attain the well-founded hope of eternal life, are many and powerful. The subject under consideration, in every view we can take of it, clearly inculcates this important lesson. How inexcusable our prevailing inattention to the weighty concerns of the soul and eternity, and our blind preference to those of a present world; while almost every surrounding object may serve to remind us of our frailty and mortality? The very works of nature are our constant monitors, and have a language in the ear of reason. Every revolving season exhibits a striking picture of the instability of our present condition. How soon are the beauties of spring, the glories of summer, and the rich prospects of autumn succeeded by the desolations of winter, the lively emblem of old age and death! — Hath not man too his seasons, and these in very quick succession? How soon is the period of childhood and youth exchanged for the vigour of manhood and that again for the infirmities of old age? Few, comparatively few indeed, unite all these in the short span of their existence! How often is the tender plant nipped in the very spring or dawn of life, and all its future prospects blasted? Few reach its meridian, and still fewer retire to its evening shade: To most their sun goes down ere noon, and happy, if to rise in brighter climes and more clement regions. How many resemble a number of
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persons upon a party of pleasure, who, while carried down a rapid stream, are so pleased and amused with the gay scenes which present themselves on either hand, that, ere they are aware, their little bark is foundered beyond reach of land? Or, like a heedless traveller, who neglects to pursue his journey while the sun offers his friendly aid, till night overtakes him, and leaves him to wander in darkness and uncertainty, not knowing where he is, or whither he is going, and every moment in danger of pits and precipices! Let us all beware of being thus amused and deceived by the vain cares, and still vain-er pleasures and amusements of life, till hurried down by the stream of time, ever incessant in its motion, to the devouring gulf of death, there left to sink, amidst darkness and sorrow, into the dire abyss of eternity. Let each setting sun, and revolving night, remind us of the approaching night of death, which may soon overtake us, when we must put off this mortal frame, to be consigned to its dusty bed, there to lie till the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the heavens pass away with a great noise, and be no more. Then shall these days, months, and years, which are measured by the revolutions of yonder sun, and may, in their utmost extent, be easily numbered, for ever cease to roll, and be all lost and forgotten in the boundless ages of eternity.— These things duly considered, and practically believed, what manner of persons would we study to be in all holy conversation and godliness? If frequently realized to the mind, by being dwelt upon in our serious thoughts and meditations, how might this, through the blessing of God, forward our preparation for that solemn state?

Is it the great end of our existence, my Christian Brethren, an end of which we should never lose sight, to glorify our God and Saviour by all the fruits of faith, love, and holy obedience, and to secure the perfection and happiness of our nature in the complete resemblance, and eternal fruition of him? Does this comprise the sum of our duty, and the whole of our felicity? With what propriety, then, do the following questions apply to each of us?—What have I yet done to answer this important end? Hath it been my chief concern hitherto, to serve and glorify God with my soul and body, which are his? to advance in conformity to his divine image, and meetness for his immediate presence? Do I count life chiefly valuable, and its enjoyments chiefly to be desired, that thereby I may have an opportunity of promoting his glory, and testifying my grateful sense of his numberless unmerited favours? Is it with me matter of deep regret and frequent lamentation, that, in time past, I have in so many instances dishonoured him, and acted in direct opposition to the great ends of my existence? to reflect that I have suffered so many precious opportunities of doing and receiving good, thoughtlessly to slip beyond recal? Does this awaken my regret and sorrow, excite to greater diligence in my Christian calling, and make me more solicitous to work the work of him who hath sent me into the world, while it is yet day?—Happy the man who can answer these and the like questions to his own conscience, as in the sight of God. He may indulge the pleasing and heart-animating hope, without fear of disappointment, of soon entering upon a state of being, where the vicissitudes of day and night, of summer and winter are unknown; where his sun

shall no more go down, nor his moon withdraw her shining; for the Lord himself shall be his everlasting light, and the days of his present warfare and mourning shall be ended. Though his way thither lies through that dreary region of horror and desolation, over which the king of terrors extends his vast empire, yet need he fear no evil; for the great Shepherd of Israel will protect him with his regal rod—the sceptre of his kingdom, and with his pastoral staff support and direct his steps, till he pass quite through the gloomy and dreaded vale, and safely arrive on that celestial mount, where John, in vision, saw the Lamb standing, with a great multitude redeemed from the earth, who were employed in celebrating his praise in a sacred song that shall be for ever new. Happy they who so number and improve their days on earth, as to pass these of unceasing ages in Emanuel's land! Such is the certain happy prospect of some of you; would to God I could say of all.

But will any extent of charity permit us to suppose, that there are not some present, who, so far from being able to answer the above and similar questions in the affirmative, would be forced to own, upon a little attention to their prevailing temper and practice hitherto, that their chief concern hath been about the comforts and accommodations of the present state; what, in the language of our Lord, they should eat, what they should drink, and wherewithal they should be clothed? The anxious cares, trivial pursuits, and perishing enjoyments of this passing scene of things have both engrossed and exhausted their thoughts, time, and activity, while religion, that grand ornament of human nature, and only source
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of true happiness, so far from claiming their chief attention, as the principal business of life, hath been either totally neglected or considered merely as a byework. Nay, perhaps, in addition to this, the gratification of their corrupt appetites and propensions, in one shape or other, forms their ruling passion and actuating principle, while the concerns of religion and eternity are treated not merely with indifference, but a kind of sovereign contempt. If such number their days at all, reflect upon their precarious and momentary duration, one would be ready to imagine, this only led them to adopt the Epicure's maxim—Let us eat, drink, and be merry; for to-morrow we die,—make the best of our present enjoyments, because a single day may rob us of them, and put this out of our power for ever. Strange conclusion indeed from such premises!—But what shall the latter end of these things be? Sure none of us can once imagine, that God sent us into this world for no higher end than to provide for the wants of a dying body, to pursue, with unwearied application, the airy phantoms of honour, pleasure, and wealth, the trinity which the men thereof worship; that, after walking a few days or years in a vain shew, and vexing ourselves to no valuable purpose, we should then return to our original dust, like the beasts that perish! Unhappy, indeed, and wretched that person's condition, though earth should hail him her happiest son, whose dispositions and course of life render reflection on the past a burden, and the prospect of the future a terror,—who cannot abide the accusations and reproaches of his own mind, and at the same time dreads the decisive sentence of that God who is now his immediate witness, and will soon prove his impartial judge. If our own hearts, blind and biassed

as they are, now condemn us, how can we have confidence towards that God who is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things—knoweth grounds of condemnation to which we never adverted, or expect to be acquitted at his enlightened tribunal? Such of you as have reason to fear that God is yet your enemy, and that you are unprepared to meet him in judgment, be reconciled to him quickly, while you are in the way with him, lest at any time he deliver you to the judge, and the judge deliver you to the officer, and you be cast into prison, whence ye shall by no means come out till ye have paid the uttermost farthing*. Such is the friendly counsel of him who best knows the value of your souls, of that salvation you have till now neglected, and the extent of that misery to which you are yet exposed; and duly regard it, for your life is in it. If wanting to yourselves in the use of these means which God hath put in your power, in order to secure an interest in the Lord Jesus, as exhibited in the gospel, will not such neglect make you quite inexcusable, and vindicate the procedure of justice in punishing you with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord? Countless millions, once in similar circumstances with the worst of us, have heretofore, on his invitation, come into his house, been entertained at his table, and are now saved by him with an everlasting salvation; and yet there is room. All our needs and grievances he is able, yea willing to redress and supply, and that according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus; so that the most vile and unworthy need not despair, if only willing to forsake their sins, and accept of him in all his saving offices.

* Matth. v. 25. 26.

Ask but in faith, in the name of Jesus, or believing the veracity of the promiser, that he will do as he hath said for his sake, and it shall be given you freely: "Seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that [thus] asketh receiveth: and he that seeketh findeth: and to him that knocketh *the door of mercy* shall be opened*." These are the words of him that cannot lie, or disappoint the hopes of those who trust in him.

But rest assured, should you remain deaf to the voice of reason, religion, and conscience, neglect to number your days, forget your latter end; and the scenes which succeed it, that ye may pursue the world, or indulge the pleasures of sin and sense with greater ease, that for these things God will bring you into judgment, and assign you your final portion with hypocrites and unbelievers. If such be the conduct and end of all ungodly men, who would not exclaim, "My soul, come not thou into their secret, into their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united with them? Gather not, O Lord, my soul with sinners; but let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."——Let me conclude in the words of the pious king of Israel, which, with those in the text, should form a part of our daily requests, "Lord, make us to know our end, and the measure of our days, what it is, that we may learn to know how frail we are; enlighten our eyes, lest we sleep the sleep of death: And so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." *Amen.*

* Matth. vii. 7. 8.

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DISCOURSE II.

THE BENEFIT OF NUMBERING OUR DAYS.

PREACHED ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE YEAR.

PSALM XC. 12.

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

HISTORY informs us of a certain great prince, who, when viewing from an eminence his numerous army pass before him, was seen to weep; and being asked by some of his attendants the reason, replied, "How can I forbear shedding tears, to reflect, that, within the course of so many years, all these brave men will be cut off by death?" Here, however, his views terminated. But how much more affecting, viewing things in the light of the gospel, to look around on a Christian assembly, and call to mind, that all the individuals who compose it, will, in the course of a few years, some of them perhaps of a few days, be numbered not only with the congregation of the dead, but have their everlasting condition unalterably fixed, either in a state of inconceivable bliss, or endless woe! Happy for us, were this consideration always deeply impressed on our hearts; but more especially when we thus present ourselves in the house of God, to speak and to hear the truths of his word. With what force and propriety then, does

does the important request in the text come recommended to one and all of us?—a request at all times suitable, but peculiarly seasonable on occasions of this nature.

Having, in a former discourse, delivered in your hearing, on a similar occasion, considered what may be implied in the exercise of numbering our days, which Moses prays in the text to be taught; I now go on to shew the happy influence of that exercise upon our temper and conduct, as suggested in the latter clause, “That we may apply our heart unto wisdom.”—But, before I proceed directly to this, it may not be improper to consider what the term *wisdom*, in this connexion, may intend; and offer a few thoughts in illustration of it. While our attention is confined to a subject in which we are all so deeply interested, may the good Lord direct to what is calculated to instruct and edify,—to impress the heart and regulate the practice; and, for this purpose, command his aid and blessing.

WISDOM, in its more ordinary acceptance, denotes that prudence and discretion by which a person is enabled to discern what is fit to be done, and also the most proper means and seasons of doing it. This far excels that mere knowledge, however valuable in itself, which respects only the bare understanding or conception of certain truths and facts; for wisdom implies the proper application of these for the regulation of our temper, passions, and conduct, according to the different relations and circumstances in which we may be placed in providence. It properly consists in proposing to ourselves the best ends, and fixing upon the fittest ways and means for attaining:

attaining and securing these ends. Here, however, as also elsewhere in scripture, it evidently imports, *universal piety*, or the practice of true religion, as embraced in its life and power;—considered as a service every way wise and rational in itself, and highly interesting and beneficial in its effects. As expressive of this, the Apostle James designs it, “The wisdom that is from above *;” a consideration, which, while it evinces its excellence and importance, also teaches our infinite obligations to the grace and goodness of God for it. As it descends from above, or derives its origin from heaven, so is it also intended, and, in its observance, admirably fitted, through the divine blessing, to qualify men for the noble services and refined enjoyments of that sublime abode. Is not this then the truest wisdom of a lapsed reasonable creature,—very enemies being judges?

In this sense we are probably to understand it, where Job describes its superior excellence, and introduces God himself as thus addressing man, “Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom †.” The fear of the Lord is often put for the whole of religion, as comprising a most essential part of it; and is here termed *wisdom*, which applies no less to its practice than its doctrines and precepts, both which bear evident marks and signatures of infinite wisdom. It is added, for the same reason, “To depart from evil,” the negative part of its happy and inseparable consequence, “is understanding.” As intending the same thing, her ways are said to be ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace; while she proves to them that lay hold of and retain her, a tree

* James iii. 17.

† Job. xxviii. 28.

of life, and a source of purest happiness; presenting length of days in her right hand, and in her left riches and honour*.

The apostle, in the passage already referred to, contrasts the wisdom of the world with that which is from above, and describes, with great propriety of sentiment and force of expression, the leading characters of both. With regard to the former, he tells us it is earthly, sensual; or natural and diabolic: It originates from beneath,—from Satan and the flesh, or human nature as corrupted by sin, and is conversant about a present world; while its maxims, so congenial and agreeable to the depraved heart, have a very general and powerful influence. But the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. True religion, as possessed of these benign properties, and producing these happy effects, is the religion of the heart; and, however it may be thought of among the wise, great, and learned of the world, is the brightest evidence and the highest expression of genuine wisdom. What profound wisdom do the doctrines contained in scripture display! these doctrines which form the immutable basis, and unerring standard of true religion. What real wisdom is expressed in the entire subjection and devotedness of the heart to its sacred dictates, and to the love of its Divine Author? which indeed comprises the sum of our duty, and the whole of our felicity. If to have just apprehensions of God, in his nature, perfections, personal subsistence, worship, and government;—of ourselves, our present state and future destination;—of

* Prov. iii. 16. 17. 18.

Christ, and the method of our recovery from guilt and misery, and being completely saved by him, and for his sake;—of our duty to God, to our fellow men, and ourselves; and the manner in which it should be performed in order to its acceptance;—of our present privileges and future prospects; if the knowledge of all this is interesting to our peace and comfort in time, and happiness through eternity; then true religion, in which all this and more is revealed, may, with the utmost propriety, be designed *wisdom*.—

Our blessed Saviour is termed *the wisdom of God**, probably because he hath revealed in his word these doctrines of true and undefiled religion, which are the result and display of infinite wisdom, and contain discoveries of the last importance to our present and future felicity. Such in the sacred office as faithfully declare these, may, with an inspired writer, address their hearers, We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ†. The Apostle, describing the superior excellence of the gospel, that doctrine according to godliness, to all human wisdom, tells us, We speak wisdom among them that are perfect; yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that cometh to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory‡. While the self-abasing doctrines of the cross of Christ, in which this heavenly wisdom is revealed from faith to faith, proved to the self-righteous Jews a stumbling-block, and appeared to the learned Greeks foolishness, to them

* 1 Cor. i. 24. † 2 Pet. i. 16. ‡ 1 Cor. ii. 6. 7.

that believe, in every age and nation, they are the power of God and the wisdom of God to salvation. Those who avowedly reject divine revelation, or, professing to admit its authenticity, model and fashion its doctrines as may best comport with their own pre-conceived opinions, may deem themselves wise,—wise enough indeed to correct the dictates of heaven, and pronounce upon them with a magisterial air; yet will it one day appear, to their confusion, that a deceived heart had led them astray; that the wisdom in which they trusted, and of which they made their boast, was not from above, but originated from a quite opposite quarter, and natively tended thither. This wisdom which is from above may appear to the learned Greeks, and those who tread in their steps, foolishness; yet will she be justified of all her children; while those who espouse that wisdom which sets itself in opposition to the gospel, and is employed to subvert it, do hereby announce themselves his children, “who, when he speaketh a lie, speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it*.” Religion and morality are on the side of the gospel, not indeed as expounded by some, but as contained in the sacred writings; for scepticism, infidelity, and errors, which sap the foundations of Christianity, corrupt the heart, poison all the springs of action, and, like the dead fly in the box of precious ointment, render the most specious acts of devotion detestable in the sight of God. Those who disclaim revelation altogether, and those who attempt to expound it by the maxims of carnal wisdom, or reduce it to the standard of unsanctified reason, are

* John viii. 44.

brethren in iniquity—both subserving the same cause, only with this difference, that the former are open and avowed in their attacks, but the latter covert and undermining—like Judas, who betrayed his master with a kiss. Of both it may in general be justly said, that it is an honour to genuine Christianity to have such for its opposers; for, by their very opposition to it, they afford no mean proof of its divine original; and hereby they fulfil what it has foretold. It is not without reason that our Lord exhorts us to be on our guard against false prophets, or teachers, who come to us in sheeps clothing*; with specious appearances of humility, meekness, piety, and innocence, that they may the more easily make a prey and a gain of the unwary; but are inwardly ravening wolves, the very reverse of what they profess to be, and the rooted foes of the life and power of godliness, and of those who seem to possess them; for of such there is the utmost need to beware: Wolves are the greatest enemies the sheep have; yet a flock of these might be committed, with equal hope of safety, to the keeping of a number of wolves, as immortal souls to the care of such teachers. The Apostle, in his usual expressive manner, describes such, “Men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith†;” who also resist the truth, and that with all their pretences to candour, to the love of truth and goodness. These carry their hatred of the truth and opposition to it a fatal length indeed, who artfully employ their reason, that talent given them in trust to occupy till their Lord and Master come to call them to an account, to rob that Lord of his Deity, and the Church

* Matth. vii. 15.

† 2 Tim. iii. 8.

of all hope of salvation from his death. What the Apostle says of his resurrection, may, with the utmost propriety, be applied to his Divinity, "If Christ be "not risen," if he be not in very truth the co-essential and co-eternal Son of God, "our preaching "is vain, and your faith is also vain; ye are yet in "your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished*." Those who in this life entertain hopes of salvation through him, "are "of all men most miserable," as being in a little to be the most miserably disappointed. The Apostles too, and all who have since followed their example, and adhered to their doctrine, are found false witnesses for God. What one of them has recorded on this head, for our direction and admonition, well merits our deep regard: "Whosoever transgresseth, "and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ," which must doubtless imply the doctrine of his Supreme Deity and atoning death—that foundation-stone laid in Zion, that rock against which the gates of hell shall never prevail, "hath not God;" that is, he is an atheist: "he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, "he hath both the Father and the Son." To shew his zeal for the truth as in Christ, his utter detestation of such fatal perversion of it, and the extreme guilt and danger of those who abet that perversion, he adds, "If there come any unto you, and bring not "this doctrine, receive him not into your house, "neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth "him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds†." The phrase, *Neither bid him God speed*, that is, pray not for success to him, or a blessing on his labours,

* 1 Cor. xv. 17. 18.

† 2 John 9. 10. 11.

implies much more than is expressed: It is equivalent to a command, enjoining all Christians to pray to the great Lord of the vineyard, that he would root up these noxious plants which are not of the Father's planting,—a command enforced by a very weighty sanction. May we not then say, with the beloved John here, "Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh?"—who confess not that Jesus is in very deed the Son of God. "This is a deceiver and an antichrist."

Because the Deity of the Son, the vicarious nature of his sufferings, and other important doctrines of the Christian system, are incomprehensible to the reason of man in the present state, must they therefore be pronounced absurd, contrary to reason, inconsistent with the perfection of the divine nature, and the like! With some, to be above the investigation of reason, and to be unreasonable, inconsistent, and morally impossible, are convertible propositions. These, however, are materially different, though often and ignorantly confounded. So to reason with respect to the phenomena of the natural world, would argue a person a very pitiful self-conceited philosopher, though some deem it an essential characteristic of a great divine, and candid inquirer after truth.

Right reason is no doubt to be regarded, as the gift and voice of God, and allowed its proper province with respect to religion; but what is this proud idol, which, under the usurped title of reason, sets at defiance the armies of the Almighty; and, to allude to the words of Jacob's sons, deals with the doctrines of his word as with a harlot!—corrupting their purity, and prostituting them to the basest of purposes,

the acquisition of human applause, the affectation of being thought wiser than others, and, of course, the perversion of the truth and power of genuine Christianity, and the advancement of the interests of error and immorality; that is, in other words, of Satan's kingdom!

The prophet that teacheth lies men may dignify with titles, but in Christ's kingdom he is the tail*; he shall have neither part nor lot in it, but be cast out as that which giveth offence, worketh abomination, and maketh a lie: "If the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be troden under foot of men †." What is said at the close of the sacred canon, justly applies to the whole inspired volume, "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book ‡." Let all venders of error and damnable heresies here read their doom, and tremble!—What does Paul say with regard to those who in his day troubled the faithful, and would pervert the gospel of Christ? Why, he says, and repeats it, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. If any man preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed §."—With what care then should we regard Solomon's

* If. ix. 15. † Matth. v. 13. ‡ Rev. xxii. 18. 19.
§ Gal. i. 8. 9.

counsel to his son, as we would not chuse to abet other mens sins, and so become sharers at length in their plagues: "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge." Prov. xix. 27.

I hope this digression, to which the subject and a certain circumstance* naturally led, will be easily excused.

* A late publication, entitled, *A Practical Essay upon the Death of Jesus Christ*, gave occasion to the above remarks, when transcribing this discourse.—While the nation is expressing their grateful veneration for the memory of that illustrious instrument, employed by providence in effecting our happy Revolution, how amazing that individuals should be found, and these too of whom very different things might be expected, who employ all their talents and address in depreciating the character, and degrading the essential honours of an infinitely greater Deliverer! Might it not be very naturally expected, that even the principle of common gratitude would rather lead to verge; if possible, to the opposite extreme? Should such be our kindness to our best Friend, of what may we not be thought capable to our enemies? Many a good and god-like work hath he shewn them from the Father, and many a kind and important office hath he performed for them; for which of these do they so requite him? Never yet, I persuade myself, did any regret in a dying hour, their having thought too highly of him, or expected too much from him; while contrary sentiments are well known to have often filled men with dread and remorse, at the near prospect of appearing before God. Did he, though the essential heir of all things, humble himself and become poor, that we might be exalted and enriched for ever? How basely ungrateful then, to take occasion thence to humble and degrade him with a witness, by all the strained efforts of criticism, and subtile refinements of metaphysical distinctions! and that at the expence of common sense, scripture, and the most important interests of mankind!—Without controversy, says the Apostle, "great" is the mystery of godliness; God was manifested in the

excused. When the enemy comes in like a flood,
and the smoke from the pit is overspreading our land,
all

"flesh!" Not so, Paul; you must be mightily mistaken, if the doctrine of some learned Rabbies be true; for what great mystery is it to see a creature, suppose him ever so dignified and exalted, manifested in the flesh; one in whom it would be robbery to claim equality with God, and to whom that term can apply only by way of accommodation, in an inferior sense, or as the Father's substitute. It is obvious the Apostle had not so learned Christ, else he had never uttered such an exclamation; and, indeed, it is evident from his writings, that his divinity was materially different from what many learned doctors would since palm upon the world.—Need any be afraid of exceeding, in attributing too much honour to Jesus? as if hereby they derogated from the honour due to the Father, when they hear it required, That all men should honour the Son as they honour the Father; that the angels of God should worship him. If Christ be only a super-angelic being united to our nature, as some affect to tell us; nay, if he be not God in very deed, possessed of every essential perfection of Deity equally with the Father, (for in the divine essence there can be no subordinate person or God) He, who is jealous of his honour, and will by no means give it to another, or admit a rival, is introduced by the sacred writers, enjoining angels and men to commit idolatry; that is, to violate his own law, and insult his sacred Majesty, by setting up an idol of jealousy before his very face, and falling down to worship it! If Socinus and his disciples are in the right, the Church universal hath practised idolatry since the commencement of time; and, what is still more strange, with the express approbation of him who forbids it upon pain of incurring his highest displeasure! Men may indeed deny, but the devils themselves believe and own the Deity of Christ, and tremble at the prospect of his vengeance. Those who worship Messiah, and yet do not believe him to be the true God, supreme over all, cannot, by any sophistry whatever, evade the charge of idolatry; and, allowing their creed on this point to be well founded

all who are on the Lord's side should embrace each opportunity, presented in providence, of lifting up the standard

founded, all the saints of whom we read in the Old Testament, who confided in him for salvation, and the whole Church triumphant, whose exercise is repeatedly described in the book of Revelation, are found ascribing glory, honour, dominion, power, and worship to another than the true God; that is, to a creature! If we may, however, rest assured, that those who were under the immediate guidance and inspiration of the Spirit, and those who are now perfect in glory, join in ascribing divine honours to the Son, it is evident they believe him to be the Most High God; and the sacred records, in the most express terms, ascertain both. Must not a scheme, then, which natively, yea necessarily involves such consequences, be unscriptural, not to say subversive of the grand object of a divine revelation?

For a person to devote himself or another to the Son of God in Baptism, must be allowed to be a solemn act of worship; and yet, does not he himself enjoin this rite on all his followers? Were he at the same time conscious, that he was no more than polite apostates from the faith would make him, who can justify him in enjoining the administration and reception of that solemn rite in his own name, as well as in that of the Father? An honest man, should he find himself misunderstood in a matter which nearly concerned those he addressed, would think himself bound in duty to set them right: Yet, according to the enemies of our Lord's Divinity, the Jews egregiously mistook his reasoning, when they inferred from it, that, being man, he made himself equal with God; and, notwithstanding, he says nothing to undeceive them, or correct their mistake. How shall we reconcile this piece of disingenuous conduct (for such it must have been on their principles), to that character with which they themselves are pleased to compliment Jesus, as an eminently holy person, a faithful witness for truth, and a friend and lover of mankind? Must not the proto-martyr Stephen have entertained very different sentiments of the Son of God, from these revived and vended by our modern rationalists, when he committed

standard of the Spirit against him, praying, he himself would bear it, and put the enemy to flight; for a spirit

committed, in his last moments, his departing spirit into his hands, which cannot be denied to be one of the highest acts of trust and worship? If he was mistaken with respect to the object of his trust, our faith and hope are vain; and mistaken he must have been, if their principles are just and scriptural?—If Jesus is not allowed to be very God, how can we justify the wisdom of the Father in ordaining him the supreme judge of the world, of the thoughts, words, and actions of every individual of the human race, from whose sentence there lies no appeal, and the execution of which the united efforts of men and angels cannot ward off? His mind must be strangely warped by prejudice, who does not see and acknowledge, that the proper discharge of this important function necessarily requires the incommunicable perfections of Deity. Upon the supposition that Jesus does not possess these, would he not be as inadequate to an object of such infinite magnitude and importance, as a little child would be to preside in the supreme council of the nation! What earthly sovereign would act a part so imprudent and impolitic, in filling up any subordinate department of government, as the Socinian hypothesis makes the all-wise God act, in an affair which so highly concerns the glory of all his perfections, the honour of his moral administration, and the happiness of his intelligent creatures? Sure the abettors of that hypothesis, with all their pretended zeal for the honour of the Father, can never, on their scheme of doctrine, vindicate his wisdom and equity in appointing Christ the judge of all. Let the blame and guilt of ascribing such weakness to God light where it is due; for the doctrine of the orthodox on this head is perfectly consistent with itself, and tends, in every respect, to display all the attributes of Deity to the highest advantage. The Psalmist tells us, “That God himself is judge;” and yet Christ expressly assures us, That “the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son.” Here Socinus and his followers take one side; for, according to them, the judge

rit of neutrality and indifference here, however common and much applauded by many, must be highly offensive in his sight, and rank us among the foes of truth.

But

is not God, in the proper sense of that term; and the Spirit, by whom David spoke, with the Father and the Son, another; for they all declare, with one consent, That God himself is judge; and yet that this is no other than Christ Jesus, to whom the Father hath committed all judgment. Such then being the opposite parties in this contest, does not modesty, to say no more, require we should express ourselves with the Apostle, "Let God be true, and every man a liar,"—every man who presumes, in the pride and self-confidence of his heart, to dissent from him? Though the cob-web schemes which proud reason spins, like the spider, out of its own bowels, may be found inconsistent with themselves, as well as with the word of God; yet we may rest assured, that word cannot be broken, or at variance with itself. The Prophet foretells, That the government, *viz.* of the Church and of the world, should be on Messiah's shoulders; but can any one dream that the Saviour of Socinus and his disciples is capable of bearing such a burden, or that the infinitely wise God would put such trust in him, and raise him to an office for which he must have at the same time known him to be altogether inadequate! Such a Saviour may indeed please those who never yet saw their need of that salvation the gospel reveals, and, retaining such principles, are but too likely never to share it; but such a Saviour will never answer the wishes, and relieve the necessities of a poor sinner, who sees himself condemned by the holy law of God, inthrall'd by his spiritual enemies, and exposed to the wrath to come. Whither such unscriptural principles tend is no mystery. All who have consulted the history of the Church cannot but know, that they pave the way to deism, infidelity, scepticism, yea atheism itself.—Socinus has not been always able to retain his votaries; many of whom, having first deserted the standard of Christianity, have, by an easy and natural transition,

But to return—To apply our hearts unto wisdom, in the sense of the prayer in the text, is, To propose the

transition, inlisted themselves under that of the false prophet Mahomet †. If so, is it possible that any professed friends of the religion of Jesus should, Galio-like, care for none of these things that tend to subvert it!

Should the author of a Treatise, the evident tendency of which is, to sap and undermine real vital Christianity, to degrade the ever-blessed Jesus, its sacred founder, into a mere creature, and rob him of all his Divine and Mediatory honours, so paving the way to the most pernicious principles, with all their fatal train of native consequences—should he, instead of being cut off, as the Apostle wishes and expresses it, by the proper exercise of church-discipline, as a troubler of Zion, and an enemy of the gospel of Christ, be allowed to sit in her judicatories without molestation, extolled by many of her professed sons as an oracle, and caressed as the man of genius and philanthropy, the friend of truth and religion, may we not exclaim, in the words of the Prophet, with regard to a laudable zeal for that inestimable depositum, the faith once delivered to the saints, *How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!* The material world can better spare the day-star, or the source of natural light, than the Church the salutary beams of the sun of righteousness—the consolatory doctrines of Christ's divinity and expiatory death, and a laudable zeal for these and the other important truths which stand inseparably connected with them. Blessed be God, however, that there are many, both of the established and non-established clergy, degenerate and lukewarm as the age is in matters of religion, who cannot tamely put up with such daring encroachments on the essential prerogatives of King Messiah: He hath not left himself, in this respect, without a competent number of witnesses and advocates for sacred

† In proof of this, and to shew how nearly allied the doctrine of Socinus and that of the grand Impostor in the East are, the Reader may consult Reland's Historical and Critical Reflections upon Mahometanism and Socinianism.

the glory and enjoyment of God, as our great and leading end in the whole of our deportment in life ;
and,

essential truth, whose hearts stir them up to come forth to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Must not all her real friends, with heart-felt pleasure, view some of different denominations courageously stepping forth on this occasion, and uniting their best efforts in defending her injured rights, and repelling the open and violent attacks of the adversary ? Such may indeed lay their account with the immoderate reproaches of the *men of moderation* ; but herein they have the apostles of our Lord for an example, who tell us, " We are fools for Christ's sake." What the Prophet remarks of his own times, hath been since often verified, " Truth faileth, and he " that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey ;" or, as the margin has it, " is accounted mad," Isa. lix. 15. This need not, however, surprise any lover of truth, as if some new thing had befallen them, when we hear it said by many, of our Lord in person, when describing his pastoral character, and proving himself the Messiah, and his undoubted claim to supreme Deity, by the works he performed, " He hath a devil, and is mad : why hear ye " him ?" John x. 20. However much those, who look upon soundness in the faith as a matter of small moment in religion, may be disposed to treat this controversy with indifference, and however ready the Doctor's friends may be to censure those who wish, in obedience to the apostolic injunction, " to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints ;" yet, certain it is, the sacred writers will abundantly justify their laudable zeal herein, for this controversy is not like many which have often agitated the Christian world.—" Who is a liar," says the apostle John in his first epistle, " but he that denieth that Jesus " is the Christ ?" That is, the anointed Saviour ; he is an antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son. Who-soever denieth the Son, *viz.* to be the Son of God, the same hath not the Father. These things, adds he, have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. It is truly amazing, that any who have access to peruse the sacred oracles should ever presume to deny a truth so clearly

and, in order to our attainment of this important end, to maintain a sincere, uniform, and steady regard to all

clearly and fully revealed; and withal so infinitely interesting in the Christian system! The same apostle, however, furnishes us with a just solution of this strange phenomenon in the moral world: They are, says he, of the world: therefore speak they of the world, or agreeable to the natural dictates and perverse notions of its votaries, and the world heareth them,—those who imbibe its maxims, and copy its examples, will applaud their doctrines, and their talents and address in setting them off to such advantage. Who is he that overcometh the world in this respect, that glorieth in the truth, though his attachment to it should expose him to the ridicule and contempt of the learned, the fashionable and polite of the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?—Speaking in the name of his fellow apostles and Christian brethren, he adds, We are of God, he that knoweth God heareth us: he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. The same thing he asserts in his gospel, as coming from the mouth of Christ himself, in his reasoning with the perverse Jews: “He that is of God heareth God’s words: ye therefore hear them not because ye are not of God.” From all this it is not difficult to infer, our Lord and his Apostles being our guide, and their verdict admitted, whose they are, and whom they serve, who pervert the gospel of Christ, and will not receive, as true, the record which God hath given of his Son, and an inference, supported by such authority, may be made without any breach of charity.

Hymeneus, Philetus, and Alexander, who began so early to trouble the Church with their vain dreams, made shipwreck of the faith, not by renouncing Christianity; for then would the Apostle say, What have I to do to judge them that are without? but by maintaining such doctrines as were inconsistent with, and subversive of the faith of the gospel, *viz.* by denying the resurrection of the body. In both his epistles to Timothy he speaks of them with a holy zeal for truth, and an apparent detestation

all the doctrines, precepts, and institutions of the gospel of Christ, as the stated means of divine appointment

tion of their error, by which her sacred rights were infringed. There he tells us, that their word, or corrupt doctrine, will eat as doth a canker, or gangrene which infects the whole body; and that by it the faith of some was overthrown. He connects faith and a good conscience as what must be held together; and, indeed, the former alone can purify and support the latter, which cannot long subsist after that is given up. It is not, in my opinion, hard to determine whether the error, for which the Apostle delivered them to Satan, that they might learn not to blaspheme, or speak evil of the truth, or these contained in the *Essay on the Death of Christ*, are the most subversive of real Christianity, and dishonouring to its Divine Author. What the same Apostle says of our Lord's resurrection, may, with no small propriety, be applied and asserted with regard to his supreme Deity, If Christ be not risen—if he be not the essential and eternal Son of God, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain; ye are yet in your sins,—under their guilt and power, and exposed to all their penal consequences. “Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished;” yea, and the Apostles, and all who have, since their day, testified with them, “That they believe and are sure, that he is Christ, the Son of the living God,” are found false witnesses for God, and base imposters on men. Expunge the doctrine of our Lord's Deity from the Christian creed, and the hope it inspires and supports from the heart of his people, and they become, at once, of all men the most miserable; for hereby they would be deprived of their chief support under all the afflictions of time, and could have no certain prospect of happiness beyond it.

How applicable, yet solemnly alarming, the words of the Apostle Peter to such as can thus pervert the gospel: “There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious

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ment for that purpose. That wisdom which does not thus manifest itself, though it should be highly esteemed

“ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they, with feigned words make merchandize of you: whose judgement now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.” Of the damnable heresies these false teachers would introduce, the Apostle fixes on denying the Lord Jesus, as being the most eminently criminal and dangerous. Here he probably has an eye to Ebion and Cerinthus, these two noted heretics, who began in the Apostles days to infest and trouble the Church, and such as might then espouse and propagate their pernicious tenets. What he says of them, however, applies, no doubt, with equal force to all in after ages, who should imbibe their hateful maxims. They may hereby, indeed, trouble Zion, grieve the hearts of the truly godly, and pervert the unstable faith of some; but to themselves the consequences will be terrible beyond conception; for divine vengeance pursues them, and ever keeps a watchful eye over them, till the fittest moment to strike the fatal but unerring blow arrive, and then the swift destruction they are said to bring on themselves will come, sudden and irresistible as a whirlwind, when none of these men of might and reason shall find their hands, or be able to deliver their own souls from the power and justice of that Jesus whose Godhead they have attempted to trample under foot. If they who despised Moses and his law died without mercy, by the hand of two or three witnesses, of how much sorer punishment, judge ye, shall they be counted worthy, who set all their wit and ingenuity on work to blaspheme the glory of King Messiah, which shines so bright in the gospel, and strain every nerve to pull the crown off his head. He will reign, however, till all his enemies are made his foot-stool, in spite of their every effort to oppose him; for God the Father hath pledged his word to see this accomplished. Poor blind ungrateful mortals may now vilify his sacred name, to whom every knee shall one day bow, and every tongue confess; yet that glorious name shall endure, and be

steemed among men; and those who possess it be wise in their own conceit, wiser indeed than seven men that

be blessed for ever by countless myriads of men and angels: "His enemies," says Jehovah, "will I clothe with shame; but upon him shall his crown flourish,"—to which let every creature say, Amen.

"Though error," says a well-known author (Dr Watson on the Improvement of the Mind), "can never be maintained by just reasoning, yet may it be artfully covered and defended: an ingenious writer may put excellent colours upon his own mistakes. Some Socinians, who deny the atonement, and, I may add, the Deity of Christ, have written well, and with much appearance of argument for their own unscriptural sentiments." The truth of this observation is often verified; for writers of this class, it must be allowed, frequently possess no small merit that way, which indeed render their productions more dangerous and insinuating to the incautious and less knowing, especially to such readers as never give themselves the trouble to examine and weigh both sides of an argument. The Doctor's specious reasoning, and insinuating colourings, may pass with some for solid argument, and will doubtless have their weight with those who are of his own cast of mind. His strenuous efforts to make the scriptures speak his own sentiments, which must have cost him no small pains, verify the couplet in the Scotch Hudibras:

"The man who is deceived most,

"All fathers on the Holy Ghost."

The specious appearances of extraordinary piety and devotion, and the complimentary encomiums on Jesus and his religion, which are so often to be met with in the deistical writers, and in some others, resemble but too much what some relate of the crocodile, That, when he would decoy his prey he weeps, and makes a grievous moan. It is long since a professed disciple betrayed the Son of Man with a kiss, the mark of friendship and love, and under this mask hath he been often since wounded in the house of his friends; and that not by avowed e-

that can render a reason; yet will it one day be felt and owned, and that before an assembled world, to have been folly in the extreme, the most fatal blindness and infatuation. From such wisdom, as hath ever proved inimical to the gospel of Jesus, and a sad impediment to its cordial reception in the world, may the great Lord of the Vineyard deliver and keep his Church and people, and at the same time dispose and enable to apply the heart unto that wisdom which is from above.—Some of the precious *effects* of numbering our days, as influencing to this, I now proceed to consider.

THAT happy art of numbering our days, which the man of God prays he and his people may be taught, in all the views given of it in the former discourse, tends, through the Divine blessing, *to influence and*

nemies, but even professed friends. May God grant such, whoever they be, repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth, that this daring iniquity may not prove their ruin.—Let the importance of the subject, and the deep interest all Christians have in it, apologize for the uncommon length to which this note hath swelled. The remarks in it proceed not from prejudice against any man, or body of men, but from a regard to the Redeemer's glory, and the best interests of his people. May he promote these great ends by the excellent defences of the Present Truth which have already appeared on this occasion, and deign to own and bless the few imperfect hints here suggested, as a mean of contributing to the same important ends.

Since writing the above, the author is happy to find that a majority in the Provincial Synod of Glasgow and Ayr approved of an overture, bearing, That they should take the same clamor respecting this Treatise into their serious consideration, and make such enquiry into the grounds thereof as to them shall seem proper. Every lover of sacred truth, and loyal subject of the Prince of Life and Peace, will surely wish their cause an impartial hearing.

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excite the heart to wisdom, or true religion in its love and practice, in as much as it teaches us duly to prize, and diligently to improve the instituted means of grace and salvation, the enjoyment of which is circumscribed by the few precarious days of life.— We, in this highly favoured Isle, are distinguished, in the course of divine providence, by the enjoyment of privileges inestimably precious, which are, at the same time, denied to by far the greater part of our fellow-men: While these, in the expressive language of scripture, are left to sit in darkness and in the region of the shadow of death, not knowing where they are, nor whither they are going, we are exalted as to heaven itself; for God hath revealed to us the great things of his law, and the still greater things of his gospel,—discoveries of the very last importance to our present peace and comfort, as guilty lapsed creatures, and the attainment of consummate felicity beyond the boundaries of time and the grave. In the sacred oracles we are informed not only of our guilt and consequent misery, as apostate, sinful, and condemned creatures, but also of a method, every way worthy of infinite wisdom and goodness, by which we may infallibly attain that perfection and blessedness of which our nature was formed capable; while our cordial acquiescence in it is enforced by motives the most powerful and endearing. Are we guilty, deprived and enslaved, ignorant of what chiefly concerns us to know, and destitute of all will and ability to chuse and practise it? the gospel of the grace of God, in all these respects, exhibits a remedy exactly suited to our case, and commensurate to our every want and woe. The Saviour it reveals, as the object of our faith and hope, is Almighty; his grace all-sufficient,

and the blessings of his purchase adequate to our every necessity, and perfective of our nature and happiness. His death presents a complete atonement for sin, and his righteousness a full equivalent for eternal life. Various, however, and interesting as these blessings are, they may, notwithstanding, be had without money and without price; and our acceptance is urged by reasons and motives the most cogent and forcible. The sacred records, these unerring dictates of divine wisdom, are to us a spring set open, a fountain unsealed, whose salutary streams flow copious in our Jerusalem, and free as the beams of yonder sun. In this respect, may it not with propriety be said, "Wisdom crieth without; and uttereth her voice in the street, and in the chief places of con-
 "course?" "We enjoy," to adopt the language of an inspired prophet, "our Sabbaths, our new-moons, "our calling of assemblies, our solemn meetings, and "appointed feasts *," and have free access to attend and observe these without any to molest or make us afraid. Do not means, then, so precious in themselves, so free and easy in their enjoyment, and so interesting in their consequences, well deserve to be had in high estimation, and attended to with peculiar care? These sacred means, however, valuable and essential to our happiness as they are, yet, if not duly and speedily improved, so far from bettering our condition, will only draw after them a train of serious and fatal consequences, enhancing our guilt, and, of course, that misery to which it exposes. The precious season of our merciful visitation, and enjoyment of the blessings of the gospel of peace, is very short

* Is. i. 13. 14.

and limited, and withal quite precarious and uncertain; yet, short and uncertain as it is, happiness or misery in the extreme, is the inseparable consequence of our improvement or misimprovement of it. This necessary lesson the exercise of numbering our days teaches; for whoever does so aright, will see them to be both short and uncertain; yet, with all their brevity and uncertainty, to be the only period allotted us to work out our own salvation, and secure, through faith in the Son of God, our happiness through eternity, with which these passing days stand connected, as the seed-time with the harvest. A consideration so weighty should lead us to put a high value on the means of grace, and to give all due diligence to improve them, while enjoyed, to the glory of God and our own salvation; well knowing there is no work, device, or amendment in the grave, to which we are all fast hastening. What a powerful motive to activity, diligence, and application in our Christian calling; to work the work assigned us by him who hath brought us into existence, while it is yet day—thus doing whatsoever our hands find to do with all our might, as the night cometh when no man can work; yet sensible of our absolute need of foreign aid, daily looking up to God, by faith and prayer, to work in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure! What a forcible inducement to prize and improve each mean of grace; for in a little all these, with respect to us, will prove a spring shut up, a fountain for ever sealed! Now grace and mercy, these inestimable gifts of which we stand in absolute need, proclaim their glad tidings in our ears, and warmly solicit our acceptance. The once crucified, but now living and exalted Saviour,
stands

stands at the door and knocks by various means, at the same time addressing us, "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with me *;" an object and proposal highly worthy of our reverential regard and serious attention. Now the Spirit of all grace deigns to move upon and strive with the human heart; and with him the bride joins in inviting whosoever will, to come and take the water of life freely. In all this we enjoy a precious privilege; and thrice happy they who are so wise as, in time, to avail themselves of it: But if we attend not, in this our day, to these things that pertain to our peace, soon will they be irrecoverably hid from our eyes. The streams of that river which now flow in and make glad the city of God, can, at farthest, attend sinners but to death; for of these the prisoners of divine justice, in the burning lake, shall never taste, nor be indulged even a single drop to allay their pains. What pious Asaph said through infirmity, they may adopt, as founded on awful reality, "Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies †?"—Then they that are filthy will be filthy still; for, not being washed in the blood of Jesus, the guilt and defilement of all their sins will remain for ever.

These things considered, let us thence be taught "so to number our days, as to apply our hearts unto true wisdom,"—to engage in earnest in the love

* Rev. iii. 20. † Psal. lxxvii. 7. 8. 9.

and practice of real religion ; and herein let us learn of the children of the world, who, in its concerns, are in general wise in their generation. In the common affairs of life, every prudent man observeth times and seasons, and will not defer a matter of consequence to some future uncertainty, when a proper opportunity presents itself. Is our work, as Christians, great and interesting, and the time assigned for its performance short and uncertain? Let us, then, up and be doing—lay aside every weight, and the sins that do more easily beset us, striving, with a holy violence, to take the kingdom of heaven, and secure our eternal felicity there. Let such be exhorted to seek the Lord while he is to be found, and to call upon him while he is near, who may have heretofore neglected so weighty a duty, because their days, which are numbered, will soon be finished, and then it will be found too late to make application. When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, what can such expect, who refused to enter while access might be had, but to hear from within, “Depart from me, I know you not, ye workers of iniquity *!” Then will they be left to stand without, and to knock and cry in vain, “Lord, Lord, open unto us :” For he will reply, “I know you not whence you are.” Be it, then, our habitual concern, as we would hope and wish to escape the wrath to come, and inherit the purchased possession of the saints in light, to come to God through Jesus the alone Mediator, in the exercise of evangelical repentance and faith unfeigned, and in the due observance of all the instituted means of

* Luke xiii. 25.

grace, herein encouraged from the consideration, that he is able to save to the uttermost all who thus come to God by him.—May we now, by his grace and Spirit, be so taught to number our days on earth, that we may apply our hearts unto this wisdom; that we may so prize and improve the gospel of peace, as to be saved in and by its divine Author, with a complete and everlasting salvation.

THIS exercise is likewise calculated to teach us to moderate our attachment to the enjoyments and pursuits of a present world.—This is connected with the above, and indeed included in it; for the inordinate love and pursuit of time's things are inconsistent with the love and practice of true religion, which weans the heart from earth, and raises the affections to things above. This, however, must not be so understood, as if religion tended to slacken the reins of industry, or was unfriendly, in the right observance of its duties, to the innocent pleasures and enjoyments of life, or the civil interests of mankind. Man is not allowed to sequester himself from society, and eat the bread of idleness, while others have a claim on the fruits of his active services, even supposing he could plead, in defence of this, the practice of devotion. Diligence in that sphere of action assigned us in providence, is, in the Christian, not only commendable, but indispensibly necessary; for the sluggard is sent to the ant to learn a lesson of provident precaution—industry and application. We are exhorted to provide things honest in the sight of all men, that we may have wherewith to support ourselves and benefit others; and told, that he who does not work, or do something in his station for his own subsistence, should not eat; yea, that he who neglects

to provide for his own, especially for those of his own household, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. If any professing godliness are, in this respect, improvident, remiss and slothful, let not religion be taxed as the cause; for, by this very conduct, they give the lie to their profession. So far is it from being a property in the Christian to spend his time, like the Athenians of old, in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing*; much less to go about from house to house, as a busy body in other mens matters, that such a conduct is quite inconsistent with his character.

As he is to be diligent in the business and concerns of life, as well as fervent in spirit serving the Lord, that he may provide for himself and connexions, according to the station in which providence hath placed him, and also have wherewith to do good and communicate to the necessities of others; so, should the Lord bless his honest industry with competence, or with riches and wealth, he is to esteem it good and comely, fit and befitting, to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun, all the days of his life, and to rejoice in his labour, all which is the gift of God, from whom alone is the power to get wealth and to enjoy it†.

But, though all this be the duty of a Christian, and what, acting in character, he will study to observe, never treating the bounties of providence, or the necessary cares and pursuits of life, with cynical indifference and contempt; must it not, however, be owned, that even the best are not without danger of exceeding here, and suffering the concerns and en-

* Acts xvii. 21.

† Eccl. v. 18. 19.

joyments of the present state to engross too much of their time, care, and affection, to the prejudice or partial neglect of concerns infinitely more interesting? To prevent a conduct so irrational in itself, and, with respect even to the best, so pernicious in its effects, and, at the same time, to lead us habitually to prize and seek after the favour, image, and enjoyment of God through Jesus the Mediator, as the one thing needful, the great and chief business of life, our frequent request and exercise should be, with the man of God in the passage under consideration, “So
“teach us to number our days, that we may apply
“our hearts unto wisdom.” Serious and frequent meditation on the brevity and uncertainty of life, with all its passing cares and fleeting comforts, would happily tend, through the blessing of God, to prevent our over-rating and too eager pursuit of these things that perish in the using, and cure us of an inordinate attachment to them—in the enjoyment. This would teach us to use the world, or enjoy its fading comforts, as not abusing them, knowing the fashion of all these things passeth away. Were we more thus exercised, could we so pursue the world, and set our hearts and affections upon it, as if its enjoyments could constitute our chief portion, and the supreme felicity of our nature, and were, at the same time secured to us for ever; did we often number our days, seriously review our present state of existence, with all its important connexions, looking up to God for the special aids of his grace and Spirit in so necessary an exercise? Would it be possible for us to have it as our chief concern and inquiry, with the Heathen who have not access to know better; “What shall
“we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall

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"we be clothed!" While we are seldom, if ever, heard to ask, like persons sensible of their guilt and misery, What shall we do to be saved? How shall we come and bow ourselves before the most High God, so as to find acceptance with him, and an interest in the great salvation? No man can, at the same time, serve two masters, whose interests and commands run counter to each other; nor can our hearts be equally divided between heaven and earth, the Creator and the creature: Such masters are God, whom we are all sacredly bound to love and serve, and mammon, that base idol, to which so many devote their hearts and their pursuits in life, and at whose shrine they sacrifice their most important concerns. Impossible it is, both in the very nature of things and by the unalterable decree of Heaven, that these should be served by the same person, at one and the same time; for our Lord assures us, that we cannot serve God and mammon*. Did we bear in mind how frail we are, and how soon we must bid a final adieu to all the cares and pleasures, the pursuits and prospects of the present state, would not the Apostle's declaration inspire godly jealousy on this head, "If ye love the world, or the things of the world, the love of the Father is not in you?" However much men may wish to reconcile these, and to act as if persuaded of their perfect consistence, we are here taught, that these two principles are so absolutely incompatible, that both cannot dwell together in the same heart. Did men duly consider their latter end, would they not be cured of that vanity of which the wise man complains, "He that loveth silver shall

* Matth. vi. 24.

“not be satisfied with silver: nor he that loveth abundance, with increase? This, adds he, is also vanity *.” In proportion as the world to come preponderates, this is sure to lose of its imaginary importance; for, weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, and viewed in the faithful mirror of eternity, it is divested of its alluring charms, and found to be lighter than very vanity, more unstable than the fleeting shadow. To form a proper estimate of life, with its various cares and pleasures, it is necessary we should bear in mind its concluding period, and frequently fix the eye of faith on the solemn interesting scenes beyond it. Faith gives substance to things hoped for, and evidence to things unseen; while it, at the same time, strips the world, in its every diversified form, of all these gay and flattering appearances, by which it fatally imposes on so many in their most important concerns. — May we be, therefore, divinely taught so to number our fleeting days as to apply our hearts unto wisdom; taught to look, not at the things which are seen and are temporal, but at these things which are unseen and eternal. In order to correct our false notions of the value and importance of sublunary things, and regulate our temper and conduct with regard to them, let us frequently advert to that languour, disgust, and satiety which so often attend sensual gratifications;—the disappointments and disasters to which present things expose;—the changes and vicissitudes which daily take place in the world, and pass on all things around us;—the rapid, the incessant progress of time;—the triumphs of death, in diversified forms, over all the individuals of our race, and

* Ecclef. v. 10.

the various disorders, pains, and diseases incident to our frame, with our liableness every moment to that event. In this situation, however, we are not left to sorrow as they that have no hope; for here the wisdom that is from above is profitable to direct, and comes powerfully recommended by such considerations.

RESERVING some farther particulars here to another opportunity, if the Lord will, I shall content myself, at present, with suggesting a few things to recommend the love and practice of this *wisdom*, in the view already given of it, to our cordial esteem and assiduous observance.

I HAVE seen, says the Psalmist, an end of all perfection; but thy commandment, subjoins he, addressing himself to God, is exceeding broad. The same may be said of *wisdom*, whose dimensions none can take. Of every species of perfection in the world experience will soon shew the end: Beauty, strength, wit, learning, and wealth, these things in which so many are apt to glory, have no glory, by reason of a glory which far excelleth. Who can fix the bounds and limits of divine wisdom,—that wisdom which God hath revealed in his word, as the sum, the base, and standard of true religion, the unerring rule of our faith and practice, and the firm foundation of our best hopes? To the height of its excellency what mind can soar! The depth of its mysteries what finite understanding can fathom! The extent of its precepts who can find out, or conceive the contents of its promises! Who can measure that love of God to man, which it reveals and describes; or that love of man to God, which it inculcates and enjoins!—

Here we may proceed, by gradual steps, from the knowledge of one thing to another; yet still the prospect opens on our view, and will to all eternity. Even in that happy state of celestial light, bliss, and love, where we shall see no more darkly, and as through a glass, there will be still abundant room for fresh discoveries; for the unsearchable treasures of infinite wisdom can never be traced out or exhausted. Thrice happy region of perfect holiness, consummate wisdom, and refined felicity! how does the world, with all its gaudy vanities, passing scenes, and tinsel glories, lessen, shrink, and disappear before thee! To those who now receive the dictates of divine wisdom, and submit their hearts to her sacred influence, these days, which may be numbered, and shall soon reach their close, will in a little give way to unbounded ages of immortal bliss. Let this wisdom, then, this offspring of Deity, be our guide through life, and the men of our counsel, and so shall we find her ways to be pleasantness, and all her paths peace. Happy is the man that findeth her; for her merchandize is better than that of silver, and her gain than the most fine gold: She is more precious than rubies; and all the things in the world, that can excite desire, are not to be compared to her. In her right hand is length of days, and in her left riches and honour. To them that lay hold upon her she will prove a tree of life; and happy is the man that retains her. Riches and honour are with her; yea durable riches and righteousness. Her fruit is better than gold, yea than fine gold; and her revenue than choice silver. She leads in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment; that she may cause those that love her to inherit substance, and fill all their treasures. Blest
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fed is the man that heareth her, watching daily at her gates, waiting at the posts of her door; for whoso findeth her findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord: but he that sinneth against her wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate her love death. This wisdom is the principal thing, and the acquisition and observance of it the one thing needful—the great and chief concern of life. Get wisdom, then, and let your heart retain her words, and keep her precepts and live. Forget her not, neither decline from the words of her mouth. Forsake her not, and she will preserve you; love her and she will keep you, and your heart in perfect peace. Let her be exalted in your judgment, affections, and conduct, and she will promote you; for she brings to honour all that cordially embrace her. Hear and receive her sayings, and she will impart an ornament of grace, a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty to your head, and the years of your life shall be many. Take fast hold of her, let her not go; keep her, for she is your very life. Having her for your guide and helper, when you go your steps shall not be straitened, and when you run you shall not stumble. If you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures, then shall you understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God; then shall you understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path. Let her enter into the heart, and be pleasant unto your soul, and she will preserve and keep you: for whoso hearkeneth unto her shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.—Keep this sound wisdom, and let her not depart from your eyes; so shall she be life unto your soul, and grace to your neck. Then shall ye walk in

the way safely, and your foot shall not stumble. When ye lie down, ye shall not be afraid; yea, ye shall lie down, and your sleep shall be sweet. Ye shall not be afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh: for the Lord himself shall be your confidence, and shall keep your feet from being taken.

Such are some of the encomiums on Wisdom in scripture,—some of the precious fruits that result from her, and the exhortations we have to choose and practise her. Does she not, then, come highly recommended to one and all of us? and can these things which the bulk of men prefer to her admit a moment's comparison? Such as embrace her, and walk in her paths alone, are wise and happy, and in the direct way to be so for ever; while all those who reject her counsels, and choose the flowery and frequented paths of vice and irreligion, shall find these infallibly lead to the gloomy chambers of the second death, where horror, misery, and soul-rending despair maintain their unceasing triumph.—To prevent a fate so fearful and irremediable, may the Lord grant us understanding in all things; and so teach us to number our few passing days, that, without delay, we may apply, with all our might, our hearts and minds unto the love and practice of heavenly Wisdom. *Amen.*

X DISCOURSE III.

THE BENEFIT OF NUMBERING OUR DAYS.

PREACHED ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE YEAR.

PSALM XC. 12.

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

THE method proposed in treating this subject, was,—To consider what may be implied in numbering our days, in the sense of Moses in the text.—Then shew the happy influence of this exercise on our temper and conduct, as imported in the application of the heart unto wisdom.

In the last discourse, after ascertaining what we are to understand by *wisdom* in this connexion, and offering some remarks in illustration of it, the exercise the man of God here prays to be taught, was shewn to have a tendency to influence the heart to wisdom, in as much as it teaches us duly to prize, and diligently to improve the instituted means of salvation: Also, as it is calculated to teach and inculcate moderation in the various pursuits and enjoyments of life.—This far did I formerly proceed, and now go on to observe,

THAT, to enumerate our days aright, will farther tend, through the divine blessing, *to make us humble*
and

and watchful in every situation and circumstance in life. Though the chief motive to humility may be drawn from our Lord's example, "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal, or to claim equality with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and humbled himself, and became obedient unto death *:" yet other motives should have their weight, and the one here suggested is none of the least. The frailty and mortality of our nature, with our precarious tenure of every present acquisition, distinction, and enjoyment, daily teach lessons of humility to man; though few, alas! are disposed to profit by them. Pride and high-mindedness, the very contrast of that temper which the gospel of Christ inculcates and enjoins, were never made for man, who, even at his best state, is altogether vanity; but, as depraved by sin, degraded in his nature beneath the irrational tribes. Like them we derive our material part from the earth, to which it naturally tends, and on which it depends for its constant support; while, with respect to our spiritual and immaterial nature, though originally formed after the image of the invisible God, which constituted man's chief glory and beauty, but which, by reason of sin, was forfeited and lost, we came to resemble Satan, the worst and most malignant being in the universe; so that we are all, till renewed by grace, the children of wrath, and heirs of condemnation. What can we then possess, that will justify a proud, haughty, over-bearing disposition? unless we should value ourselves upon what

* Phil. ii. 6. 7. 8.

ought to inspire humility and self-abasement, and glory in our very shame! But so it is, that "vain man" would be wise," proud and self-sufficient, in his own blinded eyes, "though man be born like a wild ass's colt*," and must, with respect to his exterior frame, soon die like the beasts that perish,—become food to worms, and mingle with his kindred dust. Though he resemble, in the depravity of his nature, the avowed enemy of God and goodness, and live in the practice of sin, which forms Satan's image on the human soul, and, in its reigning power, the characteristic mark of his children and subjects, yet how apt to assume such self-important airs, as if he possessed the nature, and could claim all the prerogatives of an angel of light! To cure us of a temper so highly unbecoming guilty, dependant creatures, so opposite to the nature and will of a holy God, and so descriptive of the subjects of the prince of darkness, the scriptures suggest a variety of arguments, and particularly the consideration of our latter end, as a powerful antidote against it. We cannot number our days, so as to apply the heart unto wisdom, without frequently adverting to their approaching close, and the humiliating change consequent upon it. In the morning of life we spring up, like the flower of the tender grass; but how soon do we die and waste away! how soon do we give up the ghost and mingle with the dead, in the land of deep forgetfulness, not to rise or awake till the heavens are no more! Our few, precarious, troublesome days once finished, and we are cut down like a flower, flee hence as a shadow, and continue not: "Man," says the Psalmist,

* Job xi. 12.

“is like to vanity : his days are as a shadow that passeth away. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth ; in that very day his thoughts perish *.” These things duly considered, how absurd and vain to glory in the tinsel-lustre of such borrowed feathers and adventitious ornaments, of which we must be so soon divested ! Let the children of pride view themselves in the faithful mirror death presents, and boast no more of these fading accomplishments, precarious possessions, and transitory glory, of all which that event will effectually strip them, and that at no very distant period. Are we apt to grow proud of bodily strength and personal beauty ? let us call to mind how soon disease will impair the one, and cause the rose and lilly of the other to fade and languish ; and how effectually death shall in a little destroy both. That unfeeling tyrant may soon mar the finest features, and so change the brightest, the most blooming countenance, that, instead of beauty, a ghastly vail overspreads the whole. His fatal, his unerring shafts, daily bring down the fairest forms, and the most finished structures of animated clay, to these dark and dreary abodes, whose inhabitants shall say to corruption, “Thou art my father : to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister †.” In these subterraneous chambers, they are soon reduced to a loathsome, unsightly mass, to a heap of sordid dust ; for here the pride of human beauty is stained, and all her high pretensions effectually checked. Seriously ponder this, all ye who dote upon such fading charms, and expend more time and care at the toilet, than upon the infinitely momentous concerns of your souls.

* Psal. cxliv. 4.—cxlvi. 4. † Job xvii. 14.

and eternity; and be taught, ere too late, to aspire after that beauty which will defy the power of time, and bloom in the vale of death,—even the beauty of holiness, and the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.

Or are we tempted to value ourselves on the little distinctions which arise from birth, wealth, and relative connexions?—these idols of weak minds, and boasts of the vain and haughty of our race. In order effectually to check such sentiments and emotions in their very rise, let us frequently call to mind how soon all these distinctions will cease for ever; for in the world of spirits, where we shall soon arrive, none are known but that of the righteous and the wicked: call to mind that we must soon quit this passing scene, naked as we entered upon it, mingle with our native dust, and leave behind us whatever we possess on earth,—even that in which we are most apt to glory. Proud is that heart, indeed, which the serious thoughts of death cannot humble; or an opening grave mortify to the vain shew of earthly glory! and, sure, no less weak that mind, which can be habitually elated with such things as must be so soon foregone! The little great of the world may look down, with proud disdain, from their imaginary, but dangerous heights, on those whom providence hath placed in an obscure and humble station, as mean in their original and unpromising in their appearance, like the cedars of Lebanon upon the lowly shrubs that seek shelter under their venerable shade, not once adverting, that the grand leveller Death is, mean while, laying the ax to the root that will soon lay both themselves and all their towering honours prostrate in the dust! This great teacher will then
effectually

effectually convince the most haughty and arrogant of this unwelcome and mortifying truth, which they are now so averse to believe, That God hath made of one blood all the nations and individuals upon the face of the earth; and that its proudest sons and greatest potentates must soon die like the meanest of their subjects, and leave all their boasted and envied wealth and grandeur behind them. The Apostle's simple question, with the plain, yet conclusive reasoning founded upon it, applies no less to the king on the throne than to the poorest beggar: "Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" This commonly acknowledged, but almost as commonly neglected principle, might, of itself, prove sufficient to check our pride and vain glorying, and to inspire us with lowliness of mind in the most prosperous and elevated situations. Did we view every present advantage and enjoyment, as so many gifts freely bestowed, to which we had no previous claim, then every additional blessing, crowded into our lot, would serve only to remind us of our former indigence; and the greater and more numerous these blessings were, the greater debtors should we deem ourselves, the more deeply would we feel our constant and needy dependence on God, and the less disposed would we be to glory in ourselves for the possession of them, or to undervalue, much less despise others, merely for the want of them. Till the force of this principle is felt, it is impossible we should be truly humble and grateful in prosperity, or resign-

ed in adversity. Humility, gratitude, and submission to the divine will, these kindred graces which constitute the proper temper of a Christian, and lend mutual aid and support to each other, take their rise from the persuasion and influence of this truth.

How soon will all the acquisitions of the world, which now give occasion to so much pride, envy, and contention in the land of mortals, make to themselves wings, and take their final flight from their disappointed owners to their next momentary residence! At the approach of the king of terrors, the princes, kings, and emperors of the earth must descend from their imperial thrones, and resign their crowns, their sceptres, and robes of state, at the feet of this imperious monarch, whose empire extends immensely wider than theirs; and in his gloomy territories be reduced to a level with the poorest of the people, with even the most abject and wretched of their slaves. Who would then glory in honours to be so soon buried in the tomb, the long home of the prince as well as of the peasant! or envy those, possess now what they will, who are to be so soon thus reduced to the same abject condition with the meanest of their fellow-mortals? May not these, at that awful and all-levelling event, accost the great, the mighty, and honourable of the world, in the insulting salutation which the prophet puts into the mouth of the kings of the nations, and the chief ones of the earth, to the haughty monarch of Babylon, upon his descent to the land of skulls, "Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee*."

* If. xiv. 10. 11.

In that sacred ode, we are presented with figures and images inimitably grand and beautiful,—awful and sublime; yet admirably fitted to stain the pride of all human glory: for hitherto may it come, but no farther, and here shall all its encroaching waves be stayed. What the Lord of Hosts, with whom is wisdom and strength, counsel and understanding, is said to have purposed against Tyre, that crowning city, whose merchants were princes, and traffickers the honourable of the earth, did he visibly execute upon this haughty monarch and his superb metropolis, as foretold long before by the prophet *, and will upon all of that generation of whom Agur speaks †, whose eyes are so very lofty, and eye-lids are lifted up. The Lord of Hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all earthly glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth ‡; which he awfully fulfilled in the case of both Tyre and Babylon. Thus he pours contempt upon princes, as Job emphatically expresses it, and weakens the strength of the mighty; for in his hand is the soul, or life, of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind §.

Even mental endowments, man's chief distinction from the inferior creatures, and what, when possessed in any eminent degree, gives the truest superiority over most of his own species, afford, however, no ground of glorying, no just occasion of pride and self-estimation. How often, in the course of these few uncertain days, that will so soon be finished, are some of the brightest luminaries seen to set under a cloud, thorn of all those radiant beams, which, while they have imparted light to many, do still excite our ad-

* Is. chap. xiii. and xlvii. † Prov. xxx. 13. ‡ Is. xxiii. 9.
§ Job xii. 21. 10.

miration ! The knowledge of the frailty and mutability of our nature, and all its endowments and acquisitions, derived from the enumeration of our days, and the contemplation of our latter end, may, through the concurring influence of the grace and Spirit of God, effectually cure us of that pride and vanity which are so incident to feeble mortals in the present imperfect state. Be our talents, our condition, and prospects in the world ever so flattering, from such an exercise may each of us learn thus to reason with himself, ' Why should I make much ado about superiority and precedence in life, who am so soon to be reduced to a state of equal meanness with the poorest of my fellow-creatures ! How highly indecent and unbecoming to exalt myself and debase others, since a few days, or years at most, will strip me of all these things which now make me to differ from them, bring down to the common level, and prepare my long home and silent bed in the dust of death, to which I must return naked and destitute as I came into the world ! Why should I then be proud of what I must so soon resign, and what, while possessed, can impart so little real honour and happiness ! — How much, my brethren, are considerations like these fitted to humble the native pride of the human heart, to which so many give loose reins, and to sink us as low in our own opinion as our habitation will in a little be ! " Dust thou art," says the oracle of heaven, " and to dust thou shalt return." This is verified when death unbinds the vital tie, and deposits the mortal part in his humble mansion. Sure, then, we have no great reason to glory in our original or end, both of which are alike mean and despicable. The children of pride, who can strut in their own imaginary importance, and be

vain enough to expect every sheaf should bow to theirs, seem to forget their approaching dissolution, and the meanness and obscurity of their future dwelling, where the rich and the poor, the crowned head and the beggar, who alike have God for their common Maker, meet together on equal terms, divested of every present distinction and temporary difference. So said Solomon, who had the honour to rank among the potentates of the earth, none of whom have surpassed him in glory*. Hence, he that mocketh, or insulteth the poor, is said to reproach his Maker†; that is, to impeach the wisdom and goodness of God, who, in his providence, hath appointed among men such diversity of rank, and inequality of condition, for reasons no less beneficent to society, than wise in themselves. It also reproaches God in our nature, who once became poor to make many rich. It is but a few days, and the most dignified and haughty of mortals, shall become the tenants of that land where superiority is not claimed, where precedence shall not be disputed, where the poor shall not envy the rich, nor the rich despise or oppress the poor. Such as can now, in the pride of their heart, exalt themselves and despise others, will God very soon debase. To their haughtiness and ambition will he in a little say, as he does to the most boisterous of all elements, the sea, when its raging billows lash the shore, and threaten to overwhelm the adjacent land, “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed‡.” His eyes are upon the haughty, that he may bring them down: He will bring down high looks, and this he effectually does at death§.

* Prov. xxii. 2. † Prov. xvii. 5. ‡ Job xxxviii. 11.
§ 2 Sam. xxii. 28. Psal. xviii. 27.

At the resurrection of the just, too, will he pour contempt upon their persons, and give the poorest of his people dominion over them. What a striking description does the Psalmist give of the vanity and instability of all that earthly glory which inspires so much pride and self-admiration, and of the very different conditions of good and bad men at and after death * ! and how much does it merit the serious attention of all, especially of those to whom the Spirit of God here alludes !

As numbering our days, or the serious consideration of our approaching end, is calculated to inspire humility and lowliness of mind in every situation and circumstance in life, so likewise to excite to watchfulness and circumspection, lest an event so very uncertain in the time and manner of its approach, should surprise us in an hour when we look not for it, and call us hence unprovided. By the unalterable decree of heaven, it is appointed for men once to die ; yet the particular period and mode of our departure hence are among these things which God hath, for reasons wise and gracious, put in his own power ; so that, while the general fact admits not of a moment's doubt, with respect to individuals, nothing can be more unknown and precarious. Whatever health and vigour we may possess, at no period can we promise ourselves the continuance of life, or security against the assaults of disease and death. To these fall a sacrifice the tender babe, the blooming youth, and him whose breasts are full of milk, and bones moistened with marrow, equally with the man of old age and grey hairs. In this respect, " all flesh is grass, and

* Psalm xlix.

"all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field *," upon which no sooner does God blow, than it withers and dies. Hence, says the Prophet, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: "for wherein is he to be accounted of †?" That slender thread may be cut asunder in a moment by ten thousand unforeseen casualties, at each of which death may find a certain avenue to the heart. This insatiate archer deals his shafts so promiscuously, that none can guess his next victim. With what force and propriety, then, does our Lord's admonition come home to each and all of us, "Take ye heed, watch "and pray: for ye know not when the time is?"—"Watch ye therefore; for ye know not when the "master of the house cometh: lest coming suddenly "he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I "say unto all, Watch ‡." How proper, in this view, David's prayer, "Lord, make me to know mine end, "and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may "know how frail I am §!" and that recorded by Moses, in the text, "So teach us to number our days, "that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom!" that so we may not be surprised and overtaken by this last decisive event, while we imagine it afar off, and are found quite unprepared for it ||. To disregard, or neglect the above solemn admonition, would argue the greatest folly and insatiation, and prove fraught with the most baneful consequences. Is not this awfully verified in the conduct and reception of the foolish virgins, whom death found fast asleep, with their lamps gone out, and awoke only to encounter disappointment, sorrow, and perpetual misery? O

* If. xl. 6. 7. † If. ii. 22. ‡ Mark xiii. at the close.

§ Psal. xxxix. 4. || Psal. xxxix. 41.

that we were then wise, that we understood this, and would consider our latter end, and study to be found, through grace, habitually prepared for it!—May the Lord himself so teach us to review and number our days—so impress our hearts with such an abiding sense of their brevity and uncertainty, as will effectually mortify all the seeds and remainders of that pride, vanity, and love of a present world, of which the human heart is but too susceptible; and powerfully excite to make our calling and election sure; to have our loins girded about and our lamps burning, that we may be found habitually ready for the coming of our Lord, whether it be at midnight, at cock-crowing, or in the morning. Happy they who are found, when their Master cometh, so doing,—so watching; for they shall enter into his joys.

Besides the effects already mentioned, the duty referred to in the text, as implying the exercise of faith and prayer, will have the happy tendency to alleviate the various troubles and afflictions to which real Christians are here exposed. With these, in different forms, may they lay their account; for their Lord and Master was himself made perfect through sufferings, and hath assured his followers, that it is through manifold tribulations they must enter into the kingdom. These, for the present, may not indeed be joyous, but grievous; yet are they only of short duration; for soon will they come to a final, a joyful period. The Apostle, speaking of these tribulations, in his address to suffering saints, saith, “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment,”—light however, and momentary as it is, compared to what our sins deserve, and others perhaps have borne, we
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are expressly assured, that it "worketh for us a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory *." May not, then, the consideration of the short continuance of our present trials and afflictions, and their eternal happy consequences, both reconcile the mind to them and make them appear light and tolerable, while we bear them and even feel their pressure? Weeping may indeed endure for a night, and that night may often seem tedious in passing, while the much-wished for dawn of day is almost despaired of; yet the morning will assuredly come, and bring joy and gladness with it †. Soon shall sorrow, sickness, and pain flee away, with every present woe; and the Christian be admitted to share that sacred rest and fullness of joy which await the people of God, beyond the fleeting, and not seldom vexing scenes of this mortal state. His faith will at length obtain complete victory over a present world, which so often disturbs his peace, and intercepts the cheering beams of the Sun of Righteousness ‡. The God of peace and salvation shall bruise Satan, that subtle and powerful adversary, under his feet shortly §. Sin and its offspring death, these two enemies that longest keep the field, shall be destroyed; and the grave, which never says it is enough, one day divested of its prey: "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry ||;" and that for the complete and eternal salvation of those who now look and wait for him, by a patient continuance in well-doing. May not such rejoice, so often as they number their days, to reflect that this salvation is nearer than when they believed? In the happy land of their

* 2 Cor. iv. 17. † Psal. xxx. 5. ‡ 1 John v. 4.

§ Rom. xvi. 20. || Heb. x. 37.

present destination and future possession, where they will each ere long infallibly arrive, there shall be no night of darkness, sorrow, temptation, or desertion; nor will the inhabitants once say, We are sick; for God himself is their everlasting light, health, and salvation, and the few, evil, precarious days of their present mourning shall be for ever ended *. Amidst all the sorrows and afflictions by which they can be now assailed, they may find God to be their refuge, their strength, and very present help; while the near and certain prospect of complete and final deliverance from them, may administer balm to every wound, and furnish an effectual antidote against every desponding fear, and disquieting thought. Many and various are the present troubles and afflictions of the righteous; but may it not mean while inspire hope, fortitude, resignation, patience and comfort, to be assured that the Lord delivereth out of them all? and that this deliverance is at no great distance †. May not the near and certain prospect of possessing a heavenly kingdom, of wearing a crown of life and glory, and sharing a fulness of joy in God's immediate presence, and pleasures for evermore at his right hand, make such willing to pass through manifold tribulations in their way to them? While the wicked number their days, if they ever attempt the exercise, to reflect that they will soon terminate in death, and to them usher in the doleful scenes of eternity, must embitter every present comfort, aggravate every present woe, and fill the mind with dread anticipations of the future: for their days on earth once past, and they have nothing at all to hope, but every thing to fear. Hence, so long as unwilling to break off their sins by repent-

* Rev. xxii. 5. † Psal. xxxiv. 17. 19.

ance, and their iniquities by doing righteously, they strive to banish all serious thoughts of these things from the mind, as disturbers of their present false peace and carnal joys, and set them at the greatest distance possible. On all the heirs of grace, however, whose pious care and study is, to improve each passing day to the glory of God and their own salvation, the serious thoughts of the frailty and uncertainty of life may produce the quite opposite effects; for the evil things they now receive will shortly make way for glory, honour, and immortal life. May such therefore, be now taught and enabled so to number their days, that all their present sorrows and sufferings may be divested of their sting, give occasion to the exercise of every Christian grace, and eventually converted into so many springs of growing joy.

Once more,—The serious and frequent review of our days, as terminated by death, and connected with a state of endless duration beyond the grave, tends to familiarize that event to the mind, and make it less terrible in its approach. By a law more irreversible than that of the Medes and Persians, “it is appointed unto men once to die*,” for all without exception, the righteous as well as the wicked. That interesting event, however, like the pillar of cloud and fire of old, while to the former it is all bright and luminous, exhibits to the latter nothing but darkness and terror, without one beam of light to allay the horrors of the dismal gloom. To the workers of iniquity it comes as the king of terrors and the executioner of incensed justice: but to the pious and upright it

* Heb. ix. 27.

proves a messenger of peace, and the harbinger of immortal joys. Good reason then have the ungodly and irreligious to dread this event as their deadly foe, and to address it on its approach, with wicked Ahab to the prophet; "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy*!" Each of that description will this grim messenger soon accost, as Ehud did Eglon, "I have a message from God unto thee†;" a fatal message indeed, enforced by a home stroke to the heart. Such, alas! instead of availing themselves betimes of the act of indemnity published in the gospel, in order to obtain peace and reconciliation with God, endeavour, as much as in them lies, to banish all thoughts of death and an hereafter from the mind, as impertinent intruders on their jovial hours, and disturbers of their false peace and repose; that they may pursue the world, and enjoy the pleasures of sin and sense with greater ease and relish, and with less remorse. They put this day afar off, as an evil one, and make, like the infidels of old, a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell, or the grave, forgetful that God hath said, this "your covenant shall be disannulled, and your agreement shall not stand‡." No wonder then their fears should be alarmed when this terrific king unbinds the fetters of their fatal security, and presents himself to their now opened and affrighted eyes, ready to strike that last decisive blow, which, with the dissolution of the vital tie, will at once kill all their hopes and comforts, and transmit the surviving, immortal part, with all its consciousness about it, to these dark and dread abodes, where their worm shall never die, and their fire shall not be

* 1 Kings xxi. 20. † Jud. iii. 20. ‡ Isa. xxviii. 18.

quenched. They are, therefore, justly described, in the emphatic language of inspiration, as driven away in their wickedness*, violently thrust out of the body, under the accumulated guilt and power of all their sins, and exposed to all their penal consequences.

But, while such is their deplorable case, in that solemn terrific hour, the righteous, who duly consider their latter end, and study to be found, through the aids of Divine grace, habitually prepared for it, have hope and peace in their death. For a peaceful, and sometimes triumphant exit to the world of spirits are they indebted to him in whom they have believed, even Jesus, the prince and author of life, the resurrection and the life of all his people, who, as their surety, once in person overcame death, and him that had the power of it, the devil, that they might, without slavish fear encounter both as vanquished foes; might gain a complete decisive victory over them in the last conflict, and so quit the stage of mortality with triumph. In order to this, often did their most serious thoughts and meditations terminate upon this event, and often were their days numbered with a special view to it. In its nature, cause, and consequences, so far as revealed, are they no strangers thereto; for it is their concern and aim to die daily. With regard to their material part, and the change produced upon it by death, they know, with Job, "That now they shall lie still and be quiet, shall sleep and be at rest,"—at rest from all their works of faith and labours of love†. While faith is in exercise, they can play on the hole of this asp, and put their hand upon this cockatrice's den; and yet nei-

* Prov. xiv. 32. † Job iii. 13.

ther dread nor feel any harm. Under the influence of this sacred principle, they can adopt the language of holy David, in the view of his transition from this world to the next: "Yea, though I walk through
 "the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff
 "they comfort me *:" Or that of the Apostle, in terms becoming the brighter discoveries of the gospel, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where
 "is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us
 "the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ †". Through the powerful succours of Divine grace, and the lively hopes of future glory, how many have met this last enemy, not merely with composure and serenity of mind, but even with joy and triumph, and that too when he assumed his most dreadful forms! Thus, in situations at which flesh and blood recoil, and nature shrinks back, have they been often seen to glorify God—not accepting deliverance on terms in the least unbecoming the faith and hope of the gospel, nor counting their very life dear to them, so be they might finish their course with joy. The history of the Church in every age, especially in periods of persecution for the sake of Christ, abounds with striking examples to this purpose; all which serve to shew what faith in Jesus can effect, even in the most adverse circumstances and extreme sufferings, and with what peace and joy a real Christian, under its lively exercise, can die; though it should be his lot, with the seraphic Prophet of old, to ascend to heaven in a fiery chariot. Under the animating influence of faith, love, and divine hope, with what ineffable joy

* Psal. xxiii. 4. † 1 Cor. xv. 55. 57.

and gladness will the pious undefiled soul, when called to quit the clay tenement and this mortal vale, hear descending angels address her, 'Thy sorrows, thy works of faith, labours of love, and patience of hope are at an end, and the happy, the long-expected hour of thy enlargement is come; at once put off mortality and misery, the cumbrous confinement of flesh, and the oppressive load of corruption, quit thy house of bondage, and the land of thy captivity; fly forth, and let us go together into the house of the Lord—to the holy and happy city of peace, love, and everlasting delight, which is filled and adorned with the unfading brightness of eternal glory!'—Much do we now hear of the beauty, unity, magnificence and stability of this city of God; its firm foundations garnished with all manner of precious stones; its gates of massy pearl, ever open for the admission of the nations redeemed from the earth; its streets of pure gold, as it were transparant glass; its paradise adorned with the unfading honours of the tree of life, whose fruit and leaves are for the food and healing of these nations; and watered with the crystal streams of the pure river of the water of life; while the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are their sun and temple,—the object and centre of their love and worship. After all, such as are received within her gates will find abundant reason to own, that this city far exceeds the fame which they heard, and that the half, yea the thousandth part was not told them. Therefore, when they view death as the patent road to this city, as the avenue to their heavenly Father's house; and, by faith, anticipate her refined joys, pleasures, and employments, no wonder such considerations should have power to dispel the gloom of the dark valley,

valley, and make that event welcome in its approach. To hear them then cry out with Moses, when he viewed the land of promise in distant prospect, "Lord, I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon *," is no way surprising. When faith discovers that happy land above, of which the other was but a faint type, in the light of the word, and by the help of the Spirit, it cannot be otherwise.—On all this, the exercise of numbering our days, which that holy man, in the name of the Church in the wilderness, prays, in our text, to be taught, has, through the grace of God, a happy influence. While those who neglect it are driven thence, at the close of life, from all they count dear, in their wickedness, under the guilt and power of sin, to dwell, through endless ages, where they shall never more see light; the righteous, who duly weigh the brevity of life, the instability and unsatisfying nature of all its fading comforts, and, at the same time, act and endure in every situation, as under the powers of the world to come, and seeing him who is invisible, have peace and hope in their death: for, says the Psalmist, "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace †."

Thus have I considered some of the happy effects of numbering our days on our temper and conduct; such as, leading us to prize and improve the means of salvation,—to moderate our attachment to present enjoyments and pursuits,—as tending to make us humble and watchful in every situation and circum-

* Deut. iii. 25. † Psal. xxxvii. 37.

stance in life,—to alleviate the present afflictions of the people of God,—and make death less terrible in its approach. To all which permit me now to subjoin some improvement.

Do we now enjoy, my Christian brethren, through the unmerited kindness of indulgent Heaven, many inestimable privileges and advantages, especially of a religious kind, which are denied to most of our fellow-men, and of which we in a little must render a strict account? Are we addressed, by the oracles of inspiration, “Come to the marriage-supper of the “King’s Son; for all things are now ready—Come, “buy wine and milk without money and without “price; partake of a feast of fat things full of marrow, and of wines on the lees well refined; and “hear and your souls shall live?”—Let what hath been suggested in the illustration of the subject, then, teach us all highly to prize, and cordially to embrace such generous and unlimited invitations. Let us not begin, like these alluded to in the gospel, with one consent, to plead in excuse our farm and merchandize, our houses and lands, our sensual pleasures and pursuits, as if these merited a decided preference, and could countervail our loss. While so often invited and enjoined to work in God’s vineyard,—to improve the short precarious day of our merciful visitation, let us beware of standing all that day idle, till our sun withdraw his beams, till the shadows of a long evening are stretched out upon us, and the things that concern our peace be irrecoverably hid from our eyes. Will not such a conduct be found irrational, destructive, and criminal in the extreme? and what shadow of reason can we offer in excuse of it, when
 “God

God calls us to an account? May the consideration suggested by the Spirit of God in the text, excite us to act a more wise and prudent part,—excite to improve the means of grace, while life is continued, that they may pave the way to future glory, and there at length issue.

Is it but a few days, or years at most, till the concerns and enjoyments of this state, with respect to us, shall be no more? Let us then make it our chief care and study, “To look not at the things which are seen, and are temporal;” but at these things, which, though unseen by the eye of sense, are yet substantial realities in their nature, eternal in their duration, and attended with abundant evidence to the eye of faith. Our blessed Lord, who best knows what constitutes a person happy, hath told us, “That man’s life, or happiness, consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” What a striking proof and illustration of this truth have we in that judgment which Solomon, the wisest, and perhaps the most opulent prince that ever swayed a sceptre, passes, in the book of Ecclesiastes, on all his glory and magnificence, and that upon the most mature reflection, and after the most extensive experience: “I was king over Israel in Jerusalem; I was great above all that had been before me; I made me great works; I built me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruits: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces; I gat me the delights of the sons of men: and whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy!” &c. To more

than this can earth's happiest sons pretend? Does it not, then, merit our particular notice, to hear him subjoin, "But, when I had looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour which I had taken, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit!" Yea more, not only vain and vexatious, but also dangerous and insnaring, as their influence, in his own particular case, manifested, notwithstanding his peculiar advantages. Royally splendid and magnificent as this monarch in all respects was, yet, says our Lord, speaking of the flowers of the field, "Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these." How weak and absurd, then, for any to value themselves on account of such adventitious ornaments, as, even in their highest perfection, cannot once vie with the native, the delicate, and inherent beauties which attract the eye, and may be traced in all the vegetative tribes!

As the world and the fashion thereof passeth away, with all the pomp and pageantry of earthly glory, let us so use its various comforts and enjoyments as not abusing them, and as not forgetting that we must ere long account for them. "When a few more days or years are come, then shall we go the way whence we shall not return*." To reflect, and bear habitually in mind, that here we have no continuing city, or fixed place of abode; that we are but pilgrims and sojourners travelling to another country, where we must soon arrive, and take up our perpetual residence, tends to moderate our attachments to the comforts and accommodations indulged us by the way; as also, to make us humble, watchful,

* Job xvi. 22.

and circumspect in every situation and circumstance in life, and to alleviate the various sorrows, disappointments, and trials that may occur in our lot. 'When I look,' says one, 'upon the tombs of the great, every motion of envy dies; when I read the epitaphs of the fair and beautiful, every inordinate desire gives way; when I meet with the grief of parents upon a tomb-stone, my heart melts with compassion; when I see the tombs of the parents themselves, I consider the vanity of grieving for those whom we must quickly follow; when I read the several dates of the tombs, of some that died yesterday, and some six hundred years ago, I consider that great day when we shall all of us be co-temporaries, and make our appearance together.'

With what propriety may such considerations as the following frequently occupy our thoughts? It is but a little while, and we must forego the enjoyments, and be placed beyond the inconveniencies of life, resign whatever can excite pride or envy, and enter into a world where every present distinction, that of the righteous and the wicked excepted, shall be abolished, and our state, character, and portion fixed for eternity. As we must soon quit all these, as no longer ours; so, who maketh us mean-while to differ, in any thing from another? and what have we which can be called good, that we did not receive? now if we did receive it, as a free unmerited gift, why should we at any time glory, as if we had not received it? Will the man who sees the propriety, and feels the force of such reasoning, who bears habitually in mind that he derives his all from

* 1 Cor. iv. 7.

God; that every mark of distinction he now bears in civil society, and every present enjoyment, must cease to be his at death; and that these things, even while possessed, are in themselves of trifling account, indeed of no importance at all, when put in the balance with intrinsic worth and real excellence of character; (for what is the chaff to the wheat!) will he value himself upon his worldly riches and honours, and so treat those whom God hath placed in inferior circumstances with supercilious haughtiness and contempt? Reflecting that the great Father of our spirits, and disposer of our lot in life, hath made of one blood all the nations of men that dwell on the face of the earth, and all the individuals who compose them, will he not rather be ready, as occasion offers, courteously to perform every office of kindness, humanity, and compassion to his Christian brethren; yea, to the meanest of his fellow-creatures? "Not minding high things, but condescending to men of low estate *."

Is it appointed for us all once to die? Are these days determined, and bounds fixed, over which we cannot pass? And is this event, too, altogether uncertain in the time and manner of its approach, and infinitely interesting in its immutable consequences? Let us then study, by frequent meditation thereon, to familiarize it to the mind; and, by earnest prayer and constant watchfulness and circumspection of conduct, to be found, through grace, habitually prepared for it; that we may not be then filled with dread and consternation, or overtaken by surprise, and called hence unprovided. The case of the wise, and the

* Acts xvii. 26. Rom xii. 16.

fate of the foolish virgins, when the midnight cry, announcing the bridegroom's approach, and summoning them to go out and meet him, assailed their ears, clearly demonstrate the absolute necessity of this, in order to our safe and peaceful dismissal from this mortal state, and loudly inculcate, at the same time, our Lord's admonition, "Be ye also ready; for in an hour when ye think not, the Son of man cometh." How terrible and, indeed, insupportable that coming, to those who are settled on their lees; who, instead of preparing for it, use a thousand expedients to banish all thoughts of it from the mind, and never number their days with any view to it! "Let such howl, for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty *!" If the righteous scarcely are saved, where then shall the wicked and the ungodly appear! If in the concerns of time and the body we are wise and prudent, but in the things of God and immortality have no understanding, how alarming the approach of death! how confounding our entrance upon eternity! If the day of grace is once spent, the season of our merciful visitation once over, nothing then remains to every soul out of Christ, but a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation to consume the adversaries! And spent and over will this day and season soon be, whether we improve them or not. Does God spare us from year to year, though our life be forfeited to his justice, while so many of our fellow-men, some of them perhaps younger and more vigorous than we, are called hence by death? Now their place in society and their seat in God's house know

* Isa. xlii. 6.

them no more. Are we still allowed a nail in his sanctuary, a place in his vineyard, and a name among the living in our Jerusalem, though richly deserving to be cut down as cumberers of the ground, and sent to these dismal abodes where there is no relief, nor the most distant dawn of hope, and from which there is no redemption! Is there not reason to fear, that, with respect to many of us, when the great Lord of the vineyard comes to seek fruit, he find none, or, what is still worse, only the bitter grapes of iniquity, notwithstanding our peculiar advantages! What reason have we, then, to admire his patience and forbearance, that he should wait to be gracious to such, allure us by the displays of his love, and the tenders of his mercy, and promise to remit our sins, if we but confess and forsake them! Verily this is not the manner of man, O Lord! The exercise of thy forbearance teach us to adore, to improve the day of our gracious visitation, and to embrace, without delay, the overtures of thy mercy, that iniquity may never prove our ruin. May propitious Heaven grant us such a discovery of our aggravated guilt and extreme danger, so long as not remitted, as will, by a happy necessity, accelerate our flight to that sanctuary whose gates are ever open, and effectually lead us to seek shelter from the wrath to come, under the covert of a Redeemer's blood and righteousness.

That now we are brought, in the kind providence of God, to the commencement of another year, let the time past more than suffice to have wrought the will of the flesh, and trilled with the concerns of our souls and immortality; and be it our immediate resolution, with pious Joshua, "That, whatever others do, as for us we shall serve the Lord." Have not
many,

many, during the course of the elapsed year, breathed their last, some of them perhaps our acquaintance, friends, or connexions? Who then can tell, but long before this, upon which we are now entered, is expired, we too must resign our place and privileges among mortals, and mingle, in our bodies, with our kindred dust; while the soul, our only conscious part is, by an irrevokable decree, either fixed in the possession of heavenly bliss, or doomed to the regions of immortal woe! Is it not then high time, let even the most gay and thoughtless judge, to lay aside every weight, and the sins that do more easily beset us, and begin to run that race which is set before us?—time to awake from sleep, break off our carnal security, and so to number our few passing days, that we may apply our hearts unto sacred wisdom? Would we wish to do this to any valuable purpose? let us not once attempt it in our own strength, which, at best, in such concernments, is but extreme weakness; nor lean to our own understanding, which would only prove expressive of our folly, and issue in disappointment and sorrow. What are our best resolves and efforts, if not inspired and supported from above, but like the giving up of the ghost, or the morning cloud and early dew, which soon pass away! Moses and the children of Israel, though placed in circumstances, and surrounded with objects, adapted to produce and maintain serious impressions on the mind; yet, deeply sensible of this, pray to be taught of God, and that he would cause his work to appear unto his servants, and establish the work of their hands. In him alone our strength for the work of faith and the labour of love can be found, as well as our righteousness for our acquittal from guilt, and the acceptance of our persons

sions and services; and, therefore, to him only should our eye be directed, and our prayer made, till he shew mercy upon us, and command our help from his sanctuary. We can never number our days aright, nor improve them to any saving purpose, till endued with wisdom and strength from above,—till our hearts are renewed by the agency of the Spirit, and his grace made effectual in us, and sufficient for us. This let us, in faith, ask and seek after, convinced of our absolute need of it, till we receive and find it, not ceasing to knock at the door of mercy until access is granted. The great-hearer of prayer never yet left any of the seed of Jacob—of the race of Adam, to seek his face in vain; for if we miss salvation, and sink under aggravated ruin, his throne will be guiltless, and our blood found on our own head. He swears by himself that he has no pleasure in our death. While we, therefore, attempt, in the stated observance of every appointed mean, to work out our own salvation, let us, at the same time, not forget to look up to God, by faith and prayer, for the promised aids of his grace and Spirit, humbly relying on these, as our case and exigences may require; for he alone can work in us both to will and to do, and that of his own good pleasure. To guard us against the opposite extremes of presumption in the neglect of prescribed means, and of despair of help and mercy from God in the use of them, he hath been graciously pleased to connect his precept and promise, as the rule of our conduct, and the ground, measure, and encouragement of our hope; for whatever he requires of us as a duty hath he made, in one part or other of his word, the subject of a promise. Arise then, and be doing in a humble dependence on his
grace.

grace and Spirit, and pleading the accomplishment of his faithful promise, and the Lord himself be with you—make you strong by the power of his might, and crown your desires and attempts to believe, love, obey, and serve him, with an expected, a desired end.

To conclude,—Let such of you as have been enabled heretofore, in the exercise of faith, to make Moses' request and exercise, alluded to in the text, your own, beseeching your Father in heaven to teach you the happy art of numbering your days, so as to become wise unto salvation, and active in all the duties of piety, virtue, and devotion, so as to be encouraged to bear the burden and heat of the day, and to follow on to know, love, and serve the Lord, conforming to the will of his grace in the gospel, submitting to the will of his providence, and obeying the will of his precept in his holy law,—let such continue patient in well-doing; for in a little your Divine leader will discharge you from your present state of warfare, and bid you rest from your works of faith and labours of love, by entering into your Master's joy. These days that may be numbered, are, O Christian! your only season for work and warfare, of sorrow, temptations, and sufferings, and, to encourage you to diligence, perseverance, and patience, will soon be over; and then shall you enjoy, in your Father's house above, a length of days—joyful days, which cannot be numbered, and thrice happy years which admit of neither vicissitude nor end. Having such great and precious promises, such glorious and animating prospects, and such powerful and constraining motives, to excite to diligent application in our Christian calling,—to wean our hearts from the too eager pursuit and enjoyment of present objects,—to mitigate the sorrows and suf-

ferings of life, and make death itself welcome, as our passage to glory; let this appear in the whole of our conduct, temper, and deportment, whether with respect to God, to our fellow-men, or ourselves.——

May the Lord himself, who alone can effectually do it, so teach us to number our days, that such precious effects may follow,—that we may, in truth and reality, apply our hearts unto wisdom, and, along with the form, possess and feel the power of vital Christianity; and, for this great purpose, grant us grace and understanding in all things through Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

DISCOURSE

X DISCOURSE IV.

THE CHARACTER OF THE UNDEFILED.

PSALM cxix. 1.

Blessed are the undefiled in the way.

THE self-existent and all-bountiful Creator of the universe, in order to display his glorious excellencies, and make way for the communication of his bounty and benignity, hath, by an exertion of his Almighty power, called a vast variety of creatures into existence, and conferred on each a happiness suited to its nature, the rank assigned it in the scale of being, and adequate to all its powers and capacities of enjoyment. Of all the creatures inhabiting this lower world, man holds the most distinguished rank. Whether we consider the curious, graceful, and commodious structure and organization of his body, which evidently discover wisdom and design in the contrivance; or attend to the various powers and capacities of understanding, will, and affections, where-with he is favoured,—we cannot but conclude, that he is designed for more noble ends, and more exalted enjoyments than the inferior creatures, whose only principle of action is instinct, and only source of enjoyment sensation. Man alone claims the noble prerogative of reason, as his distinguishing characteristic. Hereby he is wiser than the beasts of the field,

more intelligent than the fowls of heaven, and comes to resemble angels, these first-born sons of light,—yea God himself, the source and pattern of all perfection. Hereby he is also fitted to contemplate the wonders of creation and providence, and trace the great efficient cause of all in his various works.

It must, however, be acknowledged, that the experience of the wisest and best, in all ages, serves to evince the insufficiency of unassisted reason, in our present lapsed state, to direct to the proper mode of serving God acceptably here, and qualify for the enjoyment of him hereafter. How oft is the feeble voice of reason drowned amidst the hurry and tumult of passion, and the faithful dictates and admonitions of conscience suppressed, if not at length entirely silenced, when they stand in the way of gratifying our irregular appetites, and oppose the indulgence of our favourite passions!

The venerable sages of antiquity, however deservedly famed for their useful inventions, and surprising improvements in human arts and science, were yet so far from enjoying true happiness, or even forming just notions thereof, that they could not so much as agree wherein it consisted—some placing it in one thing and some in another; yet all mistaking its true nature and essential properties. Their elaborate and refined disquisitions on this important subject, in which all mankind are so very deeply interested, serve rather to bewilder in the pursuit, than direct to the acquisition of it; while, to the far greater part of those concerned in the inquiry, they are utterly unintelligible. To revelation alone we are wholly indebted for the interesting discovery, which
would

would have otherwise for ever remained unknown. This, while it clearly points out the path of duty, and the method of our acceptance in the performance of it, at the same time exhibits to our view a glorious prospect of life and immortality, beyond the fleeting moments and transient scenes of time, to animate our hopes and give vigour to our endeavours. The subject under consideration discovers the inseparable connexion betwixt unfeigned piety and true felicity. — *Blessed are the undefiled in the way.*

IN these words three things deserve our notice,— I. The Character specified—the undefiled.—II. The way in which they are said to be so.—And, III. The Blessedness annexed to those who are.—These discussed, as God may be pleased to assist, a few Inferences shall be subjoined.

I BEGIN with the *Character* specified in the text; and, in order to render what may be here suggested profitable for our instruction and comfort, will consider its *import*, and offer a few remarks in illustration of it.

It may not, however, be improper previously to observe, That the very reverse of this is the scripture-character of men by nature, while under the power and influence of corrupt principles and vicious propensities and passions, till the heart, that pregnant source of iniquity, is renewed by Divine grace, and cured; in part, of its plagues by the salutary waters of the sanctuary. The original depravity of our nature, in consequence of the primitive apostacy, however much many may affect to deny it, who seem not, in this respect, to have seen and felt themselves lapsed

and lost is, nevertheless, a fact not only discernible by reason, but also supported and inculcated by experience and revelation; though reason is, indeed, utterly at a loss to discover how it came to be so, and still more how it could be remedied, which is the peculiar province of the gospel. We accordingly find the efficiency of the Holy Spirit, and the regenerating power of Divine grace, in the renovation of our nature, held forth in a variety of scriptures, under the notion of washing, which evidently implies moral defilement. Hence believers are said to be washed in the laver of regeneration,—washed in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God, whose renewing and purifying influences are compared to a refiner's fire and fuller's soap.

Such, therefore, as fall under the designation of *undefiled*, have, under a deep and lively sense of their wretched situation by sin, and utter inability to deliver themselves either from its guilt or power, by the most pungent sorrow for past offences, the sincerest resolutions of future amendment, or any acts of future obedience, betaken themselves to the free mercy and rich grace of God in Christ Jesus, as exhibited in the gospel, in the exercise of genuine repentance and faith unfeigned. Thus, encouraged by the discoveries and promises of the word, they are brought, under the constraining influence of grace, to confide in God, as their merciful Father, reconciled to them through the death of his Son; in Jesus Christ, as their compassionate Redeemer, not only mighty, but also willing to save them; and in the Divine Spirit, as the prime author of their faith and holiness in their original habit, and gracious assistant in all their subsequent exercises, begetting and promoting, by his powerful

erful and animating agency, the divine life in their souls. That faith which is of the operation of the Holy Spirit, and availing to salvation, unites to Jesus, as the living and animating head of his body mystical—the Church, in him resides all fulness of grace, virtue, and efficacy, to be conveyed to all her true and genuine members, as their various wants and exigences may require. Being justified by this faith, they have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; and, being revived by the quickening power of his grace and Spirit, they are raised into newness of life, and so enabled to walk before him in all holy obedience.

This character may not only import progressive holiness of heart and life, but also refer to their justified state in the sight of God, by which they are delivered from condemnation, and entitled to eternal life through the imputed righteousness of their Surety, received by faith. Before they can have their fruit unto holiness, or perform any service acceptable in the sight of God, they themselves must be accepted in the Beloved. Till they are undefiled in their state, or set free from the guilt of sin, through the application of the atoning blood of Jesus, they cannot be undefiled in their tempers, dispositions, and conduct through the grace of the Spirit, or set free from its power and defiling stains; for the tree must be good before its fruit can be so. Holiness is the fruit and evidence, not the cause or mean, of our justification; its happy and inseparable consequence, not in any respect an inducing motive thereto on God's part: for "we are justified freely by his grace, "through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ";"

and not by any works of ours, that he might thus take away all occasion of boasting. "By the works of the law, (whether ceremonial or moral,) shall no flesh be justified*;" for if they could, would they not have something whereof to glory in the sight of God, which is absolutely incompatible with the doctrine of free, reigning grace, clearly revealed, and every where supposed in the gospel? In asserting the doctrine of free justification through faith in a Mediator, we do not, as the Apostle expresses it, frustrate the grace of God, make void the method of salvation which the gospel reveals; "for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain†:" If that could make sufficient provision for our being justified and accepted in the sight of God, there would be no occasion, much less necessity, for manifesting his grace in giving his Son to the death for us, whose ignominious sufferings and death, upon that supposition, might be spared. Let us, therefore, ever bear in mind, that we are justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; yet, ever mindful that Christ is not the minister of sin, let faith in him engage us, while dead to the law as a covenant of works, to be carefully observant of it, as a rule of life, so living to God, and before him, as those who are still under law to Jesus, and feel the constraining and animating influence of his grace and love.

Many things in scripture, though expressed in general terms, we are obliged, by the analogy of faith, and from the universal experience of the godly, to expound as referring to the believer's state, rather

* Gal. ii. 16. † Gal. ii. 21.

than to his character. Thus, when God is said to behold no iniquity in Jacob, or perverseness in Israel; and when Christ, in the Song, gives the Church the epithet of *undefiled* *, and commends her as all fair, and having no spot †; it may be presumed, these and the like phrases are employed in respect of their justification, which is absolute and perfect in the very moment of believing, as otherwise, in strict propriety of language, they would be found repugnant to many other express declarations of scripture.

The designation of *undefiled* must, however, imply, *the progressive purity of their nature, and integrity of their lives*, as the genuine fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith. That faith, to which is annexed the promise of eternal life, uniformly proves an effectual principle of sincere and unreserved obedience. This divine principle exhibits God in such a light to the believing soul, as is calculated to inspire the highest esteem, veneration, and love, which, in their very nature, have a powerful tendency to transform into the divine likeness; and, hence is said to work by love, and purify the heart. The Son of the Highest, leaving for a time the abodes of glory, and plenitude of bliss in the Father's bosom, was manifested in our nature and world, that he might destroy the works of the devil, finish transgression and make an end of sin; and hence, says the angel of the Lord to his supposed father, "Thou shalt call his name *Jesus*: for he shall save his people from their sins ‡." This he does not only in cancelling their guilt by a free pardon, but also by delivering from their power and dominion by his grace and Spirit. To this pur-

* Song v. 2. † Song iv. 7. ‡ Matth. i. 21.

pose he tells one of his disciples, on a certain occasion, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me *;" doubtless referring, not to any external washing, but to the purifying influences of his grace, and Spirit on the heart.

This character, however, imports not any legal perfection, or absolute freedom from sin and human frailty; for, to suppose this, were to contradict scripture and experience; but only a sincere and upright endeavour after universal holiness, without any allowed guile. In this sense Job was "perfect and upright †;" sincere in all his professions of piety towards God, and conscientious in his whole intercourse with men, "fearing God and eschewing evil," not only doing good, but delighting in it. In this view he tenaciously maintains his integrity and uprightness to the last, in opposition to all the surmises of his mistaken friends; though, in point of justification in the sight of God, he is ever ready to disclaim them.

Farther,—Such as answer to the character in the text, receive "into an honest and good heart ‡" the truths and doctrines of revealed religion, as the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ; considering these lively oracles as the sole and unerring rule of their faith and manners, wisely calculated to teach and dispose men, through his blessing, not only to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, but also to live soberly, by the uniform practice of all the virtues of self-government and moderation; righteously, by observing all the rules of justice and equity in their carriage in civil society, and all their transactions in

* John xiii. 8. † Job i. 8. ‡ Luke viii. 15.

common life; and godly, by an habitual regard to, and constant observance of all the duties of piety and devotion, whether personal or social, as a rational homage to God who enjoins it, and having a direct tendency, through the concurring influence of his grace and Spirit, to promote the perfection and happiness of our nature; while a regard for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ, powerfully animates to such a practice*. In order to maintain his character undefiled, the real Christian will frequently meditate on the glorious excellencies of the divine nature; the holiness, the justice, the omniscience and omnipresence of God, as admirably adapted to break the force of temptation, to enable him successfully to repel the assaults of his spiritual enemies, and influence his most secret thoughts and retired conduct. Being thoroughly persuaded of the truth and reality of eternal objects, he is deeply concerned to have his heart and mind habitually influenced by the lively consideration of their infinite importance, and steadily to maintain a line of conduct corresponding to such a persuasion, that in all things he may act as under the powers of the world to come, and endure as seeing him who is invisible. By considerations like these, did the pious Joseph repel, with noble zeal and determined resolution, a very formidable temptation, while every circumstance conspired to add weight thereto: for, argues the virtuous and honourable youth with himself on that occasion, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God†?" An example this truly worthy of imitation,—a piety

* Titus ii. 12, 13. † Gen. xxxix. 9.

crowned, by aiding and approving Heaven, with the most glorious reward, to encourage the pure, virtuous, and undefiled in every age to flee all those youthful lusts and passions which wage war against the soul, and, if indulged, stain it with indelible infamy; and also, to abound in the filial fear and love of God, and in all the sentiments and expressions of early unfeigned piety.

The blessed Author of our holy religion hath exhibited, in our nature, a perfect pattern of the most exemplary piety towards God, in all its important branches,—of the most diffusive goodness and benevolence, towards men, amiably displayed in acts of kindness, mercy, and compassion; or, as the scriptures briefly, yet emphatically express it, in going about always doing good,—good to the souls and bodies of men, as occasions offered; so that he might well appeal to his works of power, mercy, and grace, as sufficient evidences of his divine mission. Such, therefore, as are undefiled in the way, will be concerned to set their exalted Lord and Master always before them, in his holy example, as a bright, a perfect pattern for their imitation,—concerned, that these heavenly graces and divine virtues, which shone so conspicuous throughout the whole of his conduct, may be implanted and cherished by the Spirit in their hearts, and transcribed into their carriage and deportment in life. Being endued with that wisdom which is from above, and which, in its nature, is pure, peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy*; and, in its happy tendency, calculated to

* James iii. 17.

promote

promote these benign dispositions in all who listen to its heavenly dictates, and submit their hearts to its divine influence, they are cordially disposed to think upon and practise "whatsoever things are true, honest [*or honourable*], just, pure, lovely, and of good report *;" "giving all diligence to add to their faith virtue [*or fortitude*], knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity †."

But, as the most uniform character, however, falls exceedingly short of that perfection of obedience the divine law requires, and, in too many instances, violates many of its precepts, the persons under consideration will seriously and frequently review their past conduct, weigh it in the balance of the sanctuary, and, where found deficient or faulty, will, by renewed application to the blood of sprinkling, implore, with genuine regret and filial relentings of heart, forgiveness from God for past failures and offences, and assisting grace to enable them to act up to their resolutions in future. This, in effect, the royal penman frequently recommends in this psalm, to which the aphorism in the text introduces; and, while he does so, exemplifies it in his own conduct. With his blessed man, "their delight is in the law of the Lord, "and in his word do they, with pleasure, meditate day "and night ‡." The lively oracles of inspiration they consider as a fair transcript of uncreated purity and holiness, a bright display of infinite wisdom and goodness; and account the precepts of the divine law, in all things, holy, just, and good, calculated, in their observance, to promote the glory of God, the interest of society, and the good of individuals; while a re-

* Philip. iv. 8. † 2 Pet. i. 5. 6. 7. ‡ Psal. i. 2.

gard to the authority of the supreme Legislator, as manifested therein, powerfully influences their obedience.

This character the Apostle delineates in miniature, when he tells us, in the name of all true Christians, "We are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh *." The royal Psalmist, describing the character of a true citizen of Zion, also favours us with several of its great out-lines †. And, to conclude this part of the subject, our blessed Lord, in the introduction of his memorable sermon on the mount, defines it in a variety of particulars, which, with the blessing annexed to them, at once constitute the true dignity and supreme felicity of our rational nature. I now go on

To consider, *The way in which persons of the above description are said to be UNDEFILED.* This term is of various import in scripture. It sometimes denotes the conduct of Divine Providence towards men; as when "God's way is said to be in the sea, and his path in the great waters ‡:" At other times, men's carriage towards God, whether good or bad, obedient or rebellious; as when he is said to "know," that is approve "the way of the righteous," and when it is threatened, that "the way of the ungodly shall perish §." Our Lord designs himself the way ||, by which alone we can come to the Father. He is eminently so, because by him believers obtain eternal life, and an abundant entrance thither. By the admirable constitution of his person; by the heavenly

* Philip. iii. 3. † Psal. xv. ‡ Psal. lxxvii. 19.

§ Psal. i. 6. || John xiv. 6.

doctrines he taught; by the spotless example he hath set us, that we should follow his steps; by the atonement and purchase of his death, the influence and guidance of his Spirit, and his own resurrection and ascension to glory, with his prevalent intercession there for his people,—he is the sure, the alone, infallible and consecrate way to present solid peace and comfort, and future happiness. In him his people are undefiled with respect to their state, as hath been observed in illustrating their character. Though this view of the import of the term well merits our devout regard, as entering into the very vitals of religion; yet, as perfectly consistent herewith, the connexion in which it occurs here seems to restrain it to the Divine Law, that unalterable rule of moral conduct; or to denote by it, that course of holy obedience thereto, which God hath marked out and enjoined in his word, as the only patent and consecrate way to the Zion above, without walking in which no man shall attain the vision and fruition of him there.

God hath appointed a law to all his creatures, by which they are governed according to their respective natures and capacities, and the very lowest of them made to subserve the wise ends of their existence. This extends even to the various parts of the inanimate creation. What is often termed the *law of nature*, is, in this respect, no other than the law of God, or that impression of his power by which all things in the material world continue to act, from the commencement of time, in perfect conformity to his will. By him the inferior creatures are endowed with all these particular instincts that are necessary for their support and preservation, and to which they invariably conform. A wisdom is discernible in dis-

posing all their little concernments, which far surpasseth human contrivance. How exact the symmetry or proportion of a bird's nest, or of a honeycomb, as if they wrought by square and plummet! and what surprising œconomy may be seen in these little commonwealths, an ant-hill or a bee-hive! They, however, act without any remote design, and are incapable either of moral good or evil—of deserving praise or blame, while all their operations are confined within a very limited circle. As man unites in himself a twofold nature, quite distinct from each other in their mode of subsistence and principles of operation, besides the laws of matter, motion, and instinct, by which he is governed in common with the inanimate and the animate irrational creation,—as an intelligent accountable agent, he is capable of being the subject of a moral law, enforced by sanctions fitted to operate upon his hopes and fears.

By his Maker's bounty, he knew more than the beasts of the earth, and was made wiser than the fowls of heaven. He formed him for himself, and endowed him with an understanding, will, and affections, by which he was qualified to know and serve him, and to hold communion with him. Then the rule of his inward dispositions and external conduct was written in legible characters on his heart, and he was disposed, and fully able to yield it perfect obedience. Thus was he planted a noble vine, wholly of a right seed; but soon, alas! did he become the degenerate plant of a strange vine. He fell, by his transgression, from the summit of created excellency and imparted bliss, to a state of condemnation and misery. The image of God was defaced; he came to resemble Satan, whose wicked suggestion he believed,

lieyed, and lost all power to keep the law of his creation. His understanding became dark, yea darkness itself; his will prone to evil, and disinclined to good; and his affections the very reverse of what they once were! Thus, by nature, we are subject to a moral death—dead in trespasses and sin, yet the law still remains in full force; for God could not lose his title to that love, veneration, and obedience, which are his indispensable right from all his intelligent creatures. While our race were thus exposed to the stroke of justice, it pleased God, who is rich in mercy, according to his eternal purpose, to reveal himself to man through a Mediator,—the promised Seed of the woman, who should, in the fulness of time, bruise the head of the serpent. God, from the beginning, furnished his Church, in one form or other, with the knowledge of his will, as the rule of their faith and practice, and had those who walked in his commandments and ordinances blameless, or were *undefiled in the way*. The rule and unalterable standard of moral duty, that was originally delineated by God himself upon the human heart, which still retains, even among the most barbarous nations, some faint traces thereof, the supreme Law-giver, with great solemnity, published at Sinai, by the hand of Moses, to the children of Israel, whom he was pleased to choose and set apart to be a peculiar people to himself. What is moral and perpetually binding of this law is briefly summed up in the Decalogue, or Ten Commandments, which comprize the whole of our duty to God, to our fellow-men, and ourselves. The design of promulgating this law could not be, that man might be justified by his obedience thereto; for the Apostle assures us, that long before this the gospel had been

preached to Abraham, the father of the faithful *. Elsewhere he tells us, "The law entered that the "offence might abound †;" that is, that the extent, the evil, and the desert of sin might appear to abound, being beheld in this glass. Though no flesh, no partaker of human nature, can be justified by virtue of his own obedience to this rule; yet all men are under a natural and indispensable obligation to obey it, as owing their very existence to the will and power of God, and their constant preservation and well-being to his providence and bounty. Sin hath, however, not only defaced its most essential characters, but also deprived man of all power and ability to fulfil it in its spirituality and extent. We, therefore, find it promised, as one important part of the gracious stipulations of the new covenant, which God engaged to make with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah, as expressive of true believers in every age and nation, "That he "would put his law in their inward parts, and write "it in their hearts:" "That he would give them a "new heart, and put a new spirit within them; take "away the stony heart out of their flesh, and give "them an heart of flesh ‡."

Whoever acknowledges the being and providence of God, must, at the same time, grant, That it is his unalienable prerogative, as the all-perfect Creator and supreme Ruler of the world, for the manifestation of his justice and holiness in the government of his intelligent creatures, to prescribe righteous laws for the regulation of their conduct towards himself and one another, annexing to these the sanctions of rewards and punishments, which, as universal judge,

* Gal. iii. 8. † Rom. v. 20. ‡ Jer. xxxi. 33. Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

he will at last dispence. The august Legislator, and appointed Judge of all, who re-published this law from mount Sinai, with such awful pomp and solemnity, when he appeared in our world, as the great Prophet of his Church, and the immediate delegate of God to men, vindicated it, in his divine sermon on the mount, from the false glosses and corrupt interpretations of the Jewish Rabbies, by which it was dishonoured, and, in a great measure, enervated; giving us, at the same time, an excellent comment upon it, in which he fully explains and enforces its spirituality, obligation, and extent. It is very usual in scripture to express obedience thereto, by walking in its commandments and ordinances, as Zacharias and Elizabeth are said to have done. Though it cannot secure life to the most diligent observers of it, through the imperfection and depravity of our nature, which make it impossible for us to come up to its demands; yet does it serve a very valuable purpose to the believer in Jesus, as by it is the knowledge of sin; for it discovers the nature and extent of our duty, and, consequently, the many failures and defects of our sincerest and best services. Thus it clearly evinces the necessity of a speedy application to Christ by faith, as the great end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth; and so serves as a tutor and guide to direct and conduct to him for pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace; and also furnishes a perfect rule of obedience in his hand, as Mediator, to regulate in future the temper and conduct of such as thus apply. It reaches even to the most hidden thoughts, purposes, and dispositions of the heart, claims dominion over the conscience, and extends its authority over the whole man, as its proper subject. The great
and

and leading precepts of it are, to love God supremely, devoting all the powers of the understanding, and all the affections of the heart to him alone, as his unquestionable right; and, as an evidence and native consequence of this, to entertain the sincerest love and most unfeigned benevolence towards all men, but especially the household of faith, influencing us to do to others as we would, and could in reason wish they would do to us, were we in similar circumstances. This last, our Lord tells us, is the second commandment, and like the former, both comprising the sum of all that is taught in the law and prophets, and serving as a basis to universal obedience. This unalterable standard of moral conduct, and fair transcript of the divine rectitude, requires perfect conformity thereto, in the frame, tempers, and dispositions of the mind, no less than in all the actions of the external conduct; and, in case of our failure in either, subjects to its penal sanction; with neither of which, however, through our natural depravity and moral impotence, can we present it, nor bear its penalty, but at the expence of every thing perfective of our nature, and essential to our happiness; which considerations forcibly inculcate our absolute need of Christ, as made of God unto us righteousness and sanctification. To render any action conformable thereto, and acceptable in the sight of God, it must not only comport with the letter of the precept, as to the matter of it, but also flow from a regard to the divine authority impressed thereon; from a principle of love to God, founded on a sense of his glorious excellencies, as also upon that endearing relation in which he stands to his people, as their Father in heaven, reconciled to them through the death of his Son;

Son; all which not only constitute their obligation to obedience, but also powerfully and agreeably influence it. Besides, it must originate from a principle of faith in Jesus, as Mediator, be influenced by a constraining sense of his love, attempted in a humble dependence on the grace of the Spirit, and directed to the glory of God, as its great and ultimate end; while all hope of acceptance is founded on the prevalent intercession of our great High Priest before the throne, who ever lives for this purpose. True faith thus works by love, and purifies the heart, and without such faith it is impossible to please God. This criterion overlooked, an action materially good may take its rise from the very worst of principles—hypocrisy, pride, vain ambition, and a desire of human applause; all which, not being plants of our heavenly Father's planting, must be rooted up or destroyed, else they will prove the destruction of those in whom they prevail. In the sight and estimation of the great Searcher of hearts, such principles impress a value on the least services of his people, even on the poor widow's mite; while the most specious good works, and costly services of hypocrites and formalists in religion, when weighed in his balance, shall be found wanting, and rejected as counterfeit. It is therefore of the last consequence to consider well the actuating spring of our moral and religious conduct; lest, while fondly persuaded we are serving and pleasing God, we should be found only imposing on ourselves by selfish ends and motives. Every profession of love to God, and faith in Jesus, is vain and groundless, unless attended by a sincere, habitual, and unreserved regard to all his precepts and institutions, the indispensable test of its sincerity, without

without which, the hope it inspires is like the house built on the sand, which, in the hour of greatest need and danger, buries the infatuated builder and possessor in its ruins; or that hope of the hypocrite, which shall perish when God taketh away his soul. How express to this purpose what our Lord saith, "If ye love me, keep my commandments! If a man love me he will keep my words *:" and, "if ye know these things, happy are ye [only] if ye do them †:" for "not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven ‡." The ever-blessed God and Father of our Lord Jesus, and ours through faith in him, hath not only reserved a never-failing recompence in the future world—a recompence, not indeed of debt, but of grace, for all those who are now undefiled in the way; but also connected a present reward to the observance of his holy law, which often more than compensates all our pains and diligence, and renders his yoke easy, pleasant, and beneficial, to all that love him; which would now lead me to consider the *blessedness* annexed to the character specified in the text.—Reserving this, however, as the subject of another discourse, I shall conclude at present with a few remarks.

As most mistakes in religion proceed from ignorance of the nature and ends of the Divine Law, these will respect that use we should make of it as Christians, according to the mind of its sacred Author, and that but too common abuse of it, against which we should cautiously guard. From such ignorance springs

* John xiv. 15. 23. † John xiii. 17. ‡ Mat. vii. 21.

self-righteousness, that bitter root by which many are defiled, and which, under one form or other, proves so generally fatal in the concerns of salvation. Hither may be likewise traced, that too common disregard of the gospel in its native purity and simplicity, and the glaring inconsistency to be often observed in many, who, not submitting to the teaching of the Spirit in the word, darken the counsels and dictates of Heaven by words without knowledge, so confounding the law and the gospel, that we are at a loss to understand what they say, and whereof they affirm, being often inconsistent with themselves, as well as with the word of God. A proper distinct understanding of the difference, connexion, and harmony that subsist betwixt the law and the gospel, and their mutual subserviency to illustrate, confirm, and enforce each other, would be found of excellent use to preserve from opposite extremes.

The Apostle tells us, "The law is good, if a man use it lawfully *." This expression plainly implies, that it may be used unlawfully, which is the case when it is not improved to the ends and purposes designed by its Divine Author, or when it is abused to quite contrary purposes, to enumerate which would be endless. That such, then, make an unlawful use of this rule of righteousness, or fatally abuse it, who seek justification and acceptance with God by virtue of their own obedience thereto, will appear evident, if we reflect that it is not appointed for this end, nor indeed capable of answering it, in our present circumstances. To use it thus, would be, in effect, to tax the wisdom and goodness of God, and set it at

* 1 Tim. i. 8.

variance with its Maker: "For if righteousness could
 "come by the law, and if there had been a law gi-
 "ven which could have given life, verily righteouf-
 "ness should have been by the law, and, in that case,
 "Christ had died in vain †." The hopes to which
 such legal obedience may give birth, are not only des-
 titute of all foundation in scripture, but also highly
 presumptive and sinful in the sight of God; and, if
 indulged under the light of the gospel, amount to a
 wilful rejection of his grace. What our Lord said
 to Peter, when he attempted his defence, "he that
 "taketh up the sword shall perish by the sword,"
 may be applied to those who cleave to the law, in one
 form or other, to the prejudice or neglect of the me-
 thod of salvation revealed in the gospel. For a guil-
 ty lapsed creature to obtain salvation by the law will
 appear impossible, if we allow the following things
 their native weight. The law requires perfect and
 perpetual obedience, and denounces a curse upon all
 who continue not in all things written therein to do
 them. This may be argued from the absolute per-
 fection of its Author, and from the nature of its mo-
 ral subject—man, as formed by him; for the law
 makes no provision for the contracted imperfection
 and infirmities of that nature as depraved by sin, nor
 does it abate its demands on that account; also,
 from our utter inability to render such obedience,
 which is abundantly evident from scripture, and the
 experience of all the godly; and, moreover, from the
 penal sanction of the Divine Law, which we have
 all incurred, but are equally unable to bear or ward
 off, while the divine honour and veracity make the

* Gal. i. 21. iii. 21.

infliction of it necessary. The law, too, leaves no room for repentance, promises no assistance in our attempts to obey it, nor affords the least hope of pardon, be the transgressor ever so penitent. These positions only admitted as true, and to prove the contrary from scripture is, I am persuaded, impossible, effectually refute what some have asserted, and would persuade us to believe, viz. "That the law to our imperfect natures," as they choose to express themselves, "is the best obedience that our frail nature is able to perform;" that is, if I mistake not, that the law of God adjusts its demands to man's moral powers and abilities in his present lapsed state, which, at best, independent of supernatural grace, are but extreme weakness, or moral impotence. Not to mention, that, frail as human nature is, no man ever yet performed the best obedience of which that nature is capable; or practised every duty, and avoided every sin in his power; so that, was salvation suspended on this condition, none of Adam's race could claim it. Suffice it to observe, That though God is pleased to accept of the sincere but imperfect obedience of his people, yet not on account of any worth it possesses, but only for the sake of his own Son, in whom they believe; for the law, which is allowed on all hands to be a perfect rule of righteousness, requires, and cannot but require, perfect obedience, or absolute conformity thereto in heart and life; because whatever comes short of this is so far sinful, and it cannot be supposed that a holy God would, by the very demands and requisitions of his law, which is holy, just, and good, countenance and approve what is, in whole or in part, sinful. For God to require perfect obedience, and yet accept of that which comes exceedingly short of

it, without allowing or approving of its defects, is perfectly consistent; because he accepts of it, and pardons its deficiencies, not for any intrinsic worth it can possess, but only through the spotless obedience and atoning death of the ever-blessed Jesus, in whom he is ever well pleased with those who believe in and obey him; in regard that they seek the acceptance of their persons and services, and take shelter from the incurred penalty of the law, only under the covert of his blood and righteousness: "This is his name," says the Prophet, "whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS *;" and "in him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory †;" and with good reason, for he is made of God unto them righteousness.

In the above, and other respects, the gospel of the grace of God effectually remedies what the law could never effect; for "it could not make the comers thereunto perfect." Hence, says the Apostle, "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin [*or by a sacrifice for sin*] condemned sin in the flesh ‡." Should any Israelite of old, relying on his observance of the moral law, slight and disregard the positive rites of the Mosaic institution, from a pretence that these did not approve themselves to his reason, as worthy of God and agreeable to the nature of things, he would doubtless forfeit all the rights and privileges of a native Jew, and be cut off from the congregation of the Lord. In like manner, were any of us so to trust to our moral duties, tempers, and dispositions, as to

* Jer. xxiii. 6. † Is. xlv. 25. ‡ Rom. viii. 3.

see little or no need of making Christ our only hope and refuge, that very law, from our observance of which we thus blindly and fondly seek and expect life and happiness, would infallibly prove, should we remain of this mind, the ministration of death and misery. Christ alone can deliver us from the curse of the law, through faith in his name, having been made a curse for us.

If some, in their attempts to account for the phenomena of the material world, have done little else than wove spiders webs, it is to be feared, that the result of the vain reasonings of others on divinity and morals, is no better than hatching cockatrice eggs. Their labours tend not merely to mislead the judgment, but to destroy the souls of men. By an unlimited deference to their own reason and understanding, and an arrogant attempt to reduce the doctrines of Christianity to their standard, they involve themselves in uncertainty and error, till they come to make lies their refuge, and adopt, with implicit credulity, as so many self-evident truths, tenets equally dishonourable to God, contradictory to scripture, reason, and experience, and subversive of true religion.

Such do likewise unlawfully use, or rather grossly abuse the divine law, who pretend, that Christ, having fulfilled it as his peoples surety, relieves them from all obligation thereto as a rule of holy obedience. Those who persuade themselves, that the whole of religion consists in believing that Christ and salvation are theirs, run to the quite opposite extreme of what I have above cautioned against, forgetting that the faith which does not work by love, and purify the heart, is dead. This, so far from being the liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free, would be

to pervert both law and gospel, and make him the minister of sin, the very supposition of which is not only absurd but blasphemous. However much some may abuse the doctrines of grace to the purposes of licentiousness, and others may brand them as having this tendency; yet, certain it is, never did any who felt their power so think or act, and the conduct of hypocrites and slander of enemies, should not be allowed to bring any doctrine into dispute, unless it can be made appear, that it has no foundation in the word of God, and is subversive of its grand design. All who have tasted that the Lord is gracious will abhor the very thought of abusing their Christian liberty, as a cloak of licentiousness, or a subterfuge to the indulgence of sin: for, with the Apostle, are they ready to exclaim, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid: how shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein *!" While they are dead to the law in its covenant form, through their happy and intimate relation to another, even Christ; from the heart do they cordially wish to be under law to him, and, in their deliberate judgment and choice, esteem all his precepts, concerning all things, to be holy, just, and good. From him they receive the law as the unalterable rule of their temper, carriage, and deportment, recommended and enforced by his own example, and their infinite obligations to his redeeming love and subduing grace. This makes Wisdom's most arduous, narrow, and afflictive paths, to prove tolerable, if not pleasant and delightful; while the continued supplies of his grace will make our perseverance in them easy

* Rom. vi. 1. 2.

and certain. Those who would withdraw their neck from Christ's yoke, and their shoulders from his burden, possess not, as yet, the temper of his disciples; and their hopes, if they have any, are like the house built on the sand. The day is hastening on, when, as our Lord admonishes, descending rains, swelling floods, and fiercely blowing and beating winds, shall try the foundation of our hopes. "Then God will lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place *."

As the Spirit of Christ employs the law to convince of sin, of righteousness, and a judgment to come, we use it lawfully as a mean of conviction; to make us deeply sensible how far we are from possessing that holiness of heart and life it requires; and how much we lie every moment exposed to the execution of its penal sentence. Such a conviction, deeply impressed on the mind and conscience, would soon dispose to listen to the gospel with attention, and pave the way for the reception of its joyful message.

In the law, the majesty, the holiness, the justice, and supreme authority of that God with whom we have to do are to be seen as in a glass. These eminently shone in the active and passive obedience of the Lord Jesus, while he magnified the law and made it honourable, finished transgression, made an end of sin-offering, and brought in an everlasting righteousness. By all this God was glorified, and the perfection and excellence of the law manifested. Though

* Isa. xxviii. 17.

he was a Son, an only-begotten and well-beloved, yet learned he obedience and submission to the Divine will by the things which he suffered, and was not spared when he substituted himself in the room of the guilty. From what he endured, especially before and at his death, we may learn the import of these awful declarations, "The wages of sin is death: the soul that sinneth shall die."

Another use of the divine law, of which we should never lose sight, is, to consult it as a rule and standard whereby to judge of, and regulate our temper, dispositions, and outward conversation; and here every precept hath its own proper place and use. These we should often compare to the law and testimony; for, if the truth and power of religion are in us, they will comport herewith in our measure. The law is a transcript of the divine purity; and where its counterpart is found in legible characters in the temper and conduct, heart and life, we may justly conclude the safety of the person's state. As it furnishes a distinct and comprehensive view of the will of God and the path of duty, it serves to remind the very best of their many defects and failures; even when they conform most to its precepts, and so tends, through his blessing, to make and keep them humble, and, at the same time, to endear Jesus to their souls, on whom, as Mediator, they so absolutely depend, and to whom their obligations are so exceeding great. They who feel most of the constraining efficacy of his love will be most obedient and submissive; for love is the fulfilling of the law, and its cords, the bands of a man, which

which draw and bind most effectually to the obedience of faith*.

Having dwelt so long on these remarks, which, it is hoped, may be of some service to regulate our views with respect to the nature and use of the divine law under the gospel, I must conclude by observing, in one word, how happy they are who find their own character described in what hath been suggested on the first part of the subject. A more particular view of their happiness is reserved to be the subject of a separate discourse. Mean-while, let me ask, Have you who now hear me reason to believe, upon comparing your temper and conduct with the word of God, that you are undefiled in the way—walking with him and before him in all holy obedience? Is it your highest ambition and most earnest desire to be like him, and blessed in the enjoyment of him? Is Jesus all and in all to your souls, precious in his person, offices, and relations? This being the case, you cannot be unhappy in any situation; for, in the very worst, you have access to your God, share his fatherly sympathy, and after death your holiness and felicity shall be confirmed and secured for ever. To each of you does God address himself, as he did Moses, “My presence shall go with thee,

* Would the Reader see these things more accurately stated, and fully illustrated and improved, he may consult a Letter of the Reverend Mr Newton of London, the fourth under the signature of *Vigil*, from which I have not scrupled to borrow some of the above remarks. I heartily wish that the sentiments to be found there, and throughout all his writings, which cannot but render them savoury to all that love the Lord Jesus, were more universally espoused, especially by such as profess themselves masters in Israel.

“and

"and I will give you rest;" or, as he said to his successor Joshua, "I will be with thee: I will not fail thee nor forsake thee*;" which particular promise, the Apostle, writing to the Hebrews, teaches us to apply to all true believers; a mode of interpretation, so functioned, which is admirably calculated to promote the solid peace and comfort of all real Christians in every age: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee;" or, according to the well-known emphasis of the original, "I will never, never, never leave thee, I will not, yea I will not, forsake thee;" the strongest affirmation of which language can admit†. May not each of God's people then boldly say, as it follows, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me?"—May the God of all grace interest us in these and the like exceeding great and precious promises, and bless us with all that present peace, joy, and lively hope of future happiness in believing, they are so much fitted to inspire and promote. May the power of the Holy Spirit, whose province it is to enlighten and convince, remove our natural prejudices against the spirituality, extent, and strict obligation of the divine law, against the severity of its penal sanction, and its levelling quality, in stopping every mouth without distinction, by laying no stress on the seeming differences in human characters; and, at the same time, discover to our souls, the grace and glory of Christ, as the great law-fulfiller in our stead, who hath pledged his word to enable those who believe on his name, also to obey and honour it in their own persons, or to be undefiled in the way. *Amen.*

* Jos. i. 5. † Heb. xiii. 5.

X DISCOURSE V.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE UNDEFILED.

PSALM CXIX. I.

Blessed are the undefiled in the way.

GOD is indeed chiefly to be praised and had in reverence of all his intelligent creatures, for these divine attributes of which he is possessed; yet also for the exertion and display of them in his various works and ways. However manifold these works, they are all replete with wonders, and bear manifest and indelible characters of the supreme power and consummate wisdom of their Divine Author. The regular and established course of nature in the material world, however little attended to by multitudes, is, in reality, no less admirable and expressive of a Divine agency than those extraordinary interpositions of Deity, by which it hath been sometimes interrupted and suspended. The heavens above, with all their shining hosts; the earth on which we tread, with all its rich and copious fulness, declare the glory of their Maker's wisdom and goodness, and proclaim aloud in reason's ear the divinity of the hand which formed them. That bright and ample circumference, in which so many radiant worlds revolve, the variegated scenes of earth below, with all that rich and beneficent profusion of good things which mark and crown the various seasons.

sions of the circling year, though much degraded and contaminated by man's transgression, still yield a prospect which far outvies the most finished productions of art,—a prospect which obscures, yea, in a manner annihilates all the grandeur and magnificence of which mortals can boast. If the outer-court, yea the very footstool of Jehovah, though defiled by sin and subjected to the bondage of corruption, be so glorious and magnificent, what idea are we to form of the place of his immediate residence!—of the new heavens and the new earth, where sin and corruption find no place, and where righteousness and bliss fix their eternal throne! whence they liberally dispense unfading felicity to all their loyal subjects. There none but the undefiled dwell, and there all of that character are blessed for ever.

Not only in the grand and more conspicuous parts of creation are the wonders of the Creator's wisdom and beneficence displayed, but likewise even in its most minute productions. What a rich exuberance of beauty, fragrance, forms, and colours, of smells and tastes, is to be found scattered among the herbs and flowers, the shrubs, the trees, and fruits of the earth! Among the various flowers, blooms, and blossoms of the field and garden, colour triumphs in its native beauty and original delicious perfection; colour in much greater diversity than the rainbow ever knew, or the prism can exhibit to the eye. What an amazing variety of nameless flavours are distributed among the herbs and fruits, which regale the taste, and add to the delicacies of life! Amidst an apparent uniformity among the vegetative tribes, what a surprising diversity may be traced, and that not only with respect to different species, but even the individuals.

Individuals of the same species! How very numerous the distinct properties and appearances of the various trees of the field and forest, and their several uses in common life! Is it not truly admirable to reflect, that effects so numerous, so diversified, and often opposite, should proceed from causes so very simple and uniform? These two common elements, earth and water, under the direction of the great First Cause, furnish the materials out of which they are all uniformly composed. From the very same plat of ground, did the climate admit, under the influence of the sun's enlivening beams, and of seasonable dews and rain from the clouds, which are but common water, might be produced all that variety of vegetables which are found scattered over the face of the earth, with all that almost infinite diversity of virtues and properties which enrich and adorn the vegetable kingdom. How amazingly wonderful that wisdom and power which thus impart, by the very same means, the most delicious flavours and fragrance to some productions, and the most nauseous and offensive powers and virtues to others; which can raise on the same spot plants and shrubs, trees and flowers, so very different in their quality, size, and appearance! How divine and inimitable that skill, which can so diversify effects, where the second causes are so very simple, and invariably the same! Of this every revolving year affords almost infinite examples. To those who view the works of God in the world of nature with an attentive eye, such thoughts cannot but occur, and have often suggested materials for the most pleasing and instructive meditations. In these things we may admire the wisdom and goodness of the great Lord of all, ever intent on the happiness of man, to which
they

they evidently contribute; yet the gospel affords discoveries of these, and every other divine attribute, still more bright and glorious; and presents to our faith a felicity which infinitely surpasseth. If in the material creation, and even in its minutest parts, God appears wonderful in counsel and excellent in working, what must he be in the grand procedure and oeconomy of grace, the chief of all his works and ways! When contrasted with this, the former may be said to have no glory, by reason of the glory which excelleth. The power which first raised the universe from nothing, and still upholds all things; the wisdom displayed in its several parts, and the goodness which runs in copious streams throughout the whole, are still more gloriously manifested in the work of our redemption by Jesus Christ. That bounty, which, in the natural world, provides proper food for every creature, hath also provided the bread of eternal life for the nourishment of precious, perishing souls. "Let men then ascribe praise and thanks unto the Lord; for he is good; and his mercy endureth for ever*." In accomplishing the great redemption foreshadowed of old, eternal mercy hath realized in Jesus of Nazareth all the types and figures, rites and shadows, of the Mosaic institution, which portended better things to come; "but the body or substance is of Christ†." Him hath God the Father sent and sealed, to destroy the works of the devil, to bless his people, in turning away every one of them from his iniquities, and to establish that kingdom among men which consisteth in righteousness, in peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. The guilt

* Psal. cxxxvi. 1. † Col. ii. 17.

of sin he cancels by the application of his blood, their naked and obnoxious persons he covers and adorns with his robe of righteousness, and their depraved nature he renews and refines by his grace and Spirit; thus making them, like the King's daughter, all glorious without and within, both in their state and character. Thus do they become, as in the text, *the undefiled in the way*, who are blessed of the Lord, whose blessing alone maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow therewith. Having already considered the import of their character, as *undefiled*, and the *way* in which they are said to be so, I now proceed to give a short view of their *blessedness*, as described in that unerring word which brings life and immortality to light.

The righteous Ruler of the world, whose moral administration is founded in the most consummate wisdom, and regulated by the most perfect equity, to whose control all the elements of nature, with their numerous inhabitants, are subject, and made to subserve the wise and benign purposes of his universal government, hath established, both in the very order and course of things, and in the constitution of the gospel, an inseparable connexion between vice and misery, and betwixt unfeigned piety and true felicity. Persuaded of this, the Patriarch Abraham, addressing himself to God, says, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" However dark and mysterious the conduct of his providence may now often appear, yet shall it one day be manifested, to the conviction of all, that, under his wise and equitable administration, it shall be well with the righteous, but ill with the wicked †.

* Gen. xviii. 25. † Is. iii. 10. 11.

Happiness is a term, however familiar, the real import of which is perhaps understood by few. In their desires after it all men are indeed unanimous, however different, yea opposite, the courses they often take in quest of it, in consequence of the very different notions they form to themselves about it. It implies the absence of every evil, whether penal or moral; and the actual enjoyment of all that good of which our nature was formed capable. All this may be comprised in a perfect conformity to the great Source and Pattern of all natural and moral perfection, in the moral excellencies of his nature, together with a lively sense of his paternal love and goodness, both which constitute the chief glory and happiness of a rational creature. It is, however, easy to see that this inestimable blessing is enjoyed in the present life, even by the best of men, but in a very imperfect degree, the full enjoyment thereof being, for reasons wise and gracious, reserved for the world to come. Here the cup of human happiness is always mixed with opposite ingredients, and these are necessary, through the frailty and imperfection of our nature, and, indeed, wisely ordered, to prevent its fatal and but too frequent effects;—the sweetest rose hath its prickle, the finest gold its alloy.

IN tracing the *blessedness* of the undefiled, in all its extent, we are naturally led to consider it in a three-fold point of view, each transcending the other in intenseness and degree, *viz.* That which they enjoy in the present state—that upon which the disembodied spirit enters immediately at death—and the complete and eternal felicity of the whole man, to commence at the general resurrection.—Taken in this
latitude,

latitude, it opens a wide field; but let a few remarks on each suffice at present.

THAT the undefiled in the way may hope for a happiness of such extent and magnitude, without fear of presuming or being disappointed, is perfectly clear and evident from scripture. In keeping of the law, statutes, and judgments of the Lord, which are altogether true and righteous, the Psalmist tells us, "There is great reward *;" and, towards the close of the sacred canon, they are pronounced blessed that do his commandments †. "Great peace have they who love God's law: and nothing shall offend them," or cause them finally stumble from the way ‡. "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom.—Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace §." As from the above and the like declarations, often to be met with in scripture, their happiness in the present state may be justly inferred; so their entrance upon a state of felicity at death, and its unceasing duration beyond it, is there no less clearly ascertained and inculcated: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth; that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them ||." The particle *henceforth* is generally understood to intend from the time of their death; as if it had been said, immediately after their dissolution they are blessed, are put in full possession of a felicity that shall never terminate; which sense seems most agreeable to the connexion, and is indeed countenanced by the whole tenor of divine revelation: "Blessed," says our Lord, "are the pure in heart; for they shall see

* Psal. xix. 11. † Rev. xxii. 14. ‡ Psal. cxix. 165.

§ Prov. iii. 13. 17. ¶ Rev. xiv. 13.

"God *;" see him here by faith, in and by the various means of grace; hereafter, in glory; and at his future coming will he address them, "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord †;" in consequence of which, they are said elsewhere to "go into life eternal," where they shall be for ever with him.

So great and various are the sources, whence results the happiness of those who truly love and serve God, that even to mention them would exceed the bounds of one discourse. What refined entertainment do the great truths and discoveries of the gospel afford to the understanding! and with what joy do its sacred hopes and promises cheer and refresh the heart! In the exercise of the various graces and practice of the several duties of religion, the most solid and rational satisfaction is to be found. What tends to remove the chief causes of inward trouble and disquiet; such as doubt and uncertainty in matters of the highest moment, guilt and the fears consequent upon it, with the restless despotic sway of unsanctified passions and irregular appetites;—what tends to inspire and impart the most animating hopes and comforts, and to furnish occasion for the most elevated joys and pleasures, must sure be allowed to contribute to human happiness. That the faith and practice of Christianity happily tend to produce such benign effects, appears both from the sacred oracles and the concurrent testimony of the wise and good in every age.

Deliverance from the penal sanction of God's violated law, which subjects every transgressor to the

* Matth. v. 8. † Matth. xxv. 21.

divine malediction, and all these direful effects of his displeasure it imports;—the recovery of the divine image in regeneration;—adoption into God's family, with an unalienable title to all the privileges, immunities, and prospects that are inseparably connected therewith, constitute no small part of this blessedness, and form that kingdom of God, with all its precious appendages, in the believing soul, which consists in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.—Deliverance from the tyrannic power and vassalage of sin and Satan,—from the domineering sway of unruly lusts and passions,—and free access to God at all times, and in every situation, through a Mediator, as a reconciled Father, is a freedom in all respects worthy of the Son of God to purchase and bestow; and calculated to render the person possessed of it truly happy, even in the most abject circumstances. How matchless the grace, and distinguishing the privilege, “that the kindness and love (or philanthropy, as the word is) of God our Saviour toward man appeared *!” as the Apostle, with grateful admiration, observes, in that he should “give himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works †;” that we might be saved, “not by works of righteousness which we have done,” or indeed can do, “but according to his mercy, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost ‡.”

What sweet composure and serenity of soul must arise from a sense of the Divine favour and approbation—from intimations of pardon and reconciliation.

* Tit. iii. 4. † Chap. ii. 14. ‡ Chap. iii. 5.

through a Mediator ! What a rich entertainment does the testimony of an approving conscience afford—a conscience sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, and so purged from guilt and dead works to the service of the living God ! This diffuseth such a calm sun-shine and heart-felt joy, as nothing earthly can impart, nor earth nor hell wholly take away ; for the face of God beheld in peace, dispels each saddening gloom, and brings an antepast of heaven to the soul. What pure and sacred pleasure will it give to a pious, generous mind, to promote the happiness of others so far as in his power ; habitually to exercise every divine grace and social virtue, from a principle of unfeigned love to God, and disinterested benevolence towards men ! Even in adversity may the true Christian be happy, confiding in the faithfulness of his God, who hath promised, that all things shall contribute to the good of such as love him, yea work out for them a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory. Death itself, however terrible to carnal men, who have their portion only in this life, proves to the righteous a messenger of peace—a vehicle to translate their undefiled souls to the blissful regions of eternal day, where divine love for ever shines in its brightest glories and most refulgent beams. Faith in the Divine Redeemer supports the believing soul, even in the immediate view of an awful eternity, enabling the expiring Christian to adopt that triumphant song, “ O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ *.”

* 1 Cor. xv. 55.

“ Death’s

"Death's terrors is the mountain faith removes,

" 'Tis faith disarms destruction.

" Believe, and look with triumph on the tomb."

Dr YOUNG'S *Night Thoughts*.

WITH regard to that *blessed state* upon which the souls of good men enter *immediately at death*, though the scriptures afford sufficient discoveries upon which to found our faith and hope in it, as an important article of the Christian creed; yet will it remain, in a great measure, unknown till the undefiled soul, disengaged from the pressure of corruption, and the cumbrous confinement of flesh, emerge, like the sun from under a cloud, to the glorious regions of pure and permanent felicity, where the light of that eternal day, which knows no decline, will break forth upon it with more than meridian splendours, and the shadows of former ignorance and imperfection for ever flee away.

That the blessedness intended in our text is not to be confined to any thing believers can enjoy on earth, may be inferred from the Apostle's declaration, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable*." That this respects not merely the Apostles and primitive Christians, is evident; for though they were exposed to peculiar hardships and sufferings, yet were they favoured with peculiar supports and consolations, which made these more than tolerable. What real Christians, as such, enjoy here, however valuable in itself, would scarce deserve the name of happiness, if detached from their future prospects; and, indeed, their chiefest joys in life spring from the exercise of faith and hope in

* 1 Cor. xv. 19.

things unseen. Of those who now desire a better country; that is, an heavenly, the Apostle says, "Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city;" which plainly intimates, that without such preparation and provision for them beyond this fleeting state, he would be ashamed to own himself their God, and to have them called by his name. In tracing their happiness, therefore, in the extent proposed, what the Spirit of God intends in the passage, and the illustration of it natively requires, I presume is not exceeded; for, without an interest in a felicity of such extent and magnitude, instead of being blessed, as the Psalmist declares they are, they would indeed be of all men most miserable; an Apostle himself being judge.

As the intermediate period betwixt our death and the general resurrection may, perhaps, be considerable, it may not be improper, nor, I hope, unacceptable, to suggest, in so many words, a few of these arguments which serve to prove, that when the loyal subjects of Messiah's kingdom are absent from the body, they shall be present, in their souls, with their Lord, completely blessed in the vision and fruition of him; especially as this consolatory truth hath been and still is impugned and denied, not only by those of the Roman Catholic persuasion, who maintain the doctrine of purgatory, but also by many professed Protestants.

That the soul does not sink at death, as some who pretend to rational inquiry and philosophic disquisition tell us, to a dormant torpid state, equally insensible of pleasure and pain, so to remain till the resurrection of the body, may be argued from its own native

tive powers and capacities, which can act and exert themselves, as experience daily evinces, independent of matter, or the medium of the senses. This is verified in our dreams in sleep, in which we often find reason, reflection, memory, volition, and different affections, acting their respective part, and exciting pleasure or pain, which we have reason to believe would not be the case was not the soul immaterial, and possessed of a power in itself to exert its several faculties, quite independent of the material organized frame.—This truth admits of no mean proof and illustration also from analogy, drawn from the inferior creatures, some of which pass into a more perfect state of being and enjoyment by a change not unlike death. This is annually exemplified, to instance no other, in the common caterpillar, which, after lying some time in a torpid state, bursts its confinement, and, from a despicable reptile, creeping slowly on the ground, becomes a quite distinct species, soaring aloft with activity, arrayed in beauty which no art can imitate, and capable of sensations and enjoyments till then unknown.—The soul's capacity of enjoying happiness or enduring misery, in a state of separation from the body, may be likewise argued from the general consent of mankind, even those of them who had no idea of a future resurrection; for to them it seemed neither absurd nor impossible, that the active intelligent principle in man should exist and exert its various powers and capacities, detached from and independent of the material organized system, over which alone they thought death had power.

Here, however, our faith rests not on these and the like presumptive arguments, though they may serve to stop the mouths of those who pretend to be guided

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ed by the light of nature in forming their judgment on the subject, and yet deny this precious and soul-animating truth, as being in their opinion repugnant to all its known laws; and also, in connexion with what follows, of that spurious brood of Christians who have expunged this important article of Christianity from their creed. It were easy to make it appear from the sacred writings, did our intended brevity here permit, that this is the doctrine of both the Old and New Testament; and entered into the belief of God's people in every age. The translation of Enoch before the giving of the law, and of Elias under it, plainly implies this; for if they were not admitted to enjoy felicity in the Divine presence, their removal from this state, instead of rewarding their exemplary piety, would involve a severe punishment. The pious Asaph appears to have had this full in his eye, when he thus addresses God, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to thy glory*." To this, doubtless, Paul refers, when he speaks of that event, which would remove him from the Church below, as effecting at the same time his transition to Christ, which, with respect to himself, he affirms to be far better than remaining longer in the body†. According to the Socinian notion on this head, the Apostle was here egregiously mistaken; for his enjoyments in the body far exceeded any thing to which their sleeping saints can pretend. John also saw in vision "the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ," actively employed in serving God, which plainly says, that they then

* Psal. lxxiii. 24. † Philip. i. 23.

lived to him, and in his presence. This is farther confirmed from what our Lord said of old, in refutation of the fatal error of the Saducees, these ancient infidels, declaring God to be the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, at the same time that these Patriarchs were dead for many ages; yet adding, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living;" which clearly proves, that their souls then lived to him, and were happy in the full vision and fruition of him *. It also farther appears from our Lord's promise to the expiring thief: "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise;" that is, in a state of happiness, which plainly supposes perception and enjoyment. His privilege in this respect was not singular; for Stephen saw his exalted Saviour standing at the Father's right hand, ready to receive his departing soul, breathed forth amidst inhuman violence, into the mansions of bliss, in his glorious and immediate presence. Our Lord himself hath taught us, by his dying example, to commit our departing spirits into the hands of a Father in heaven, no doubt in the hope of a safe convoy and abundant entrance thither, not, sure, with a view to lull them into a sleep of some thousand years.

With what serenity then, yea extatic joy, may a true Christian, dying in the Lord, resign his breath, when he is firmly persuaded, upon the authority of the divine faithfulness in the word, that, instead of passing, at death, through a fiery trial in purgatory, or sinking into a state of insensibility and non-enjoyment, his disembodied spirit shall be immediately received, and conducted by guardian-angels into the

* Matt. xxii. 32.

blissful presence of his heavenly Father, to the immediate enjoyment of his glorified Redeemer, and to the blessed society of angels, and of the kindred spirits of just men made perfect,—thus obtaining an abundant and triumphant entrance into his celestial kingdom and glory!

Two things are absolutely necessary to the happiness of an intelligent dependent being, *viz.* That he be placed in such circumstances, and surrounded with such objects, as in their nature are capable of yielding happiness; and also, that he be endued with such dispositions and capacities as are essential to the felicity of a rational creature, and fitted to derive it from these. The former, without the latter, is quite insufficient; for though we were placed in heaven itself, without a corresponding change of nature, we might be still miserable. Both these, however, concur to render the undefiled happy in the separate intermediate state; for there all the persons of Deity are intimately present and enjoyed,—the best society to be found, the most glorious scenes presented, and springs of the purest and most refined pleasures set open: and, to shew how much all of that description, are fitted to derive felicity from these objects and circumstances, they are called *the spirits of just men made perfect*. The nature and extent of that felicity, however, I attempt not now to describe. Suffice it to say, that it is every way worthy of him who bestows it, and calculated to render the person possessed of it happy beyond what we can now conceive, by all the aid faith and revelation can give.

But though the happiness of the separate disembodied spirits of just men made perfect, may as far exceed that of the happiest Christian on earth as his
exceeds

exceeds that of an infant in the womb; yet is there reason to believe, that it comes far short of what the saints shall enjoy, in their complete persons, after the general resurrection. The union of the two constituent parts of our nature, soul and body, is not only necessary to the perfection of the human frame, but also to the full fruition of that bliss of which that nature was formed capable, and to the possession of which God hath decreed to bring his people. Hence, even those who have the first fruits of the Spirit are said to "groan within themselves, waiting for the adoption;" that is, as the Apostle explains it, "the redemption of their body *." The re-union of soul and body is necessary to their perfect conformity to their Lord, in his glorified human nature; and hence believers are represented as "looking for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, from heaven, to change their vile body;" or, as the original phrase imports, *the body of their humiliation state*, "that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself †." To this solemn period, and the happy change consequent upon it, does the Apostle John refer, when he saith, "Beloved, it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is ‡," which blessed vision has a native influence in producing this conformity.

The glory and happiness of that state upon which the sons of God shall then enter, in their complete persons, are represented in scripture by figures and metaphors, borrowed from such objects as are most

* Rom. viii. 32. † Phil. iii. 21. ‡ I John iii. 2.

highly prized among men; yet something is always prefixed to shew how far these fail in describing it. Is it designed a house?—as a peculiar recommendation, it is our heavenly Father's house, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Is it designed a city?—it is the new the holy Jerusalem, the city of the living God,—more costly in its materials, more splendid in its ornaments, more magnificent in its palaces, more numerous and brilliant in its happy and dignified inhabitants, more spacious in its extent, and more firm and impregnable in its foundations and walls, than any, or all the cities of which earth could ever boast. A city this so durable and permanent, so precious and glorious, that its foundations are represented by rocks of solid gems, its pavements described as gold, and its several gates as composed of one massy pearl*.—Is it compared to an inheritance? it is such an one as fadeth not away;—to a kingdom? it is the kingdom of God, one that cannot be moved;—to a crown? it is a crown of glory, that will for ever adorn the temples of him that wears it; a crown of life, which secures a glorious immortality to the happy possessor. Is their felicity stiled *a fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore*?—to enhance their value, these are to be enjoyed in the presence of God, and at his right hand†.—Fully to describe their bliss, or even to form an adequate idea of it, exceeds all human efforts. If the comforts and hopes of religion here, as felt and embraced in its life and power, are often so sweet and refreshing, how will they refine and improve in the world of light, love, and bliss, where faith is exchanged for vision,

* Rev. xxi. † Psal. xvi. 11.

and hope for complete enjoyment? Is it pleasant and delightful to taste of the grapes of Eshcol?—to drink of the streams of that river, which makes glad the city of God? and, from mount Pisgah, to take a distant view of the land of promise? What must it prove then to be translated to the celestial paradise! to eat of the fruit and sit under the shade of the tree of life, which grows there; and be placed at the very fountain-head of felicity, on the banks of the pure river of the water of life, which flows clear and transparent as crystal from the throne of God and the Lamb! Is it pleasant and refreshing to the soul, to anticipate, in the exercise of faith and hope, the honourable employment, and refined joys and pleasures of the heavenly state? what then to share, after the toils and fatigues of our weary pilgrimage, “that sacred rest” which remaineth for the people of God*! When the Lord Jesus shall appear in his own, and in his Father’s glory, attended by his mighty angels, “The “ransomed of the Lord,” who now, in the exercise of faith, hope, and a patient continuance in well-doing, look for him, “shall return, and come to Zion “with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads; “they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow “and sighing shall flee away†.” Amid that grand celestial community, God himself dwells and presides, as their Sovereign, their Father, and their source of light and bliss, as well as the object and centre of their worship and praise. All its members are holy, peaceful, and happy; for in the enjoyment of his favour and presence they possess an endless duration of glory, honour, and felicity: “So,” faith

* Heb. iv. 9. † Isa. xxxv. 10.

the Apostle, "shall they be ever with the Lord;" the certain accomplishment of which consolatory promise he urges as a sufficient ground of comfort, even in prospect, under the heaviest trials and distresses of life*. Then shall Jesus, in whom they now believe and rejoice, though unseen, as the object of their faith, love, and hope, be beheld, without interruption, or an interposing vail, "as the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person," "as the chiefest among ten thousands,"—the sum and source of all beauty and excellence; who is in himself, and in the estimation of all that have eyes to behold him, "altogether lovely." With what extatic joy will they view these sacred temples that once wore a crown of thorns, that they might wear a crown of life and glory! these hands that were ever ready to relieve the needy and distressed; and these feet that went about always to do good, still bearing indelible marks of their having been once nailed to the accursed tree for their sins, and in order to accomplish their salvation! With what ineffable delight will they take part in the song of Moses and the Lamb, that new and triumphant anthem of the redeemed? "Thou art worthy; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests."—"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God even his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen†." Though angels cannot bear part in this song of the redeem-

* 1 Theff. iv. 17. † Rev. v. 9. 10.—i. 5. 6.

ed, yet do they join in the general chorus,—“Wor-
 thy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power,
 “and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour,
 “and glory, and blessing;” join with an universe of
 beings in ascribing “Blessing, and honour, and
 “glory, and power, unto him that sitteth upon the
 “throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever *.”
 Without doubt such an exercise carries more than its
 own reward with it, in the soul-transporting joys it
 inspires. There each overcomer shall inherit all
 things; for says, the faithful and true One, “I will
 “be his God, and he shall be my son.”—“God him-
 “self shall be with them, and shall wipe away all
 “tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more
 “death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there
 “be any more pain: for the former things are passed
 “away.” In Emanuel’s happy land above, the blessed
 have free access to the streams of the pure river of
 the water of life, which make God’s city, the holy
 Jerusalem, exceeding glad; and to the tree of life
 and immortality which grows amidst the celestial
 paradise. “Their city needs neither sun nor moon
 “to shine in it, because there is no night there; for
 “the glory of God enlightens and overshadows it,
 “and the Lamb is the light and temple thereof.”—
 “The saved nations shall come to its light, and walk
 “in the brightness of its shining.” Such kings and
 nobles of the earth as are wise enough to submit to
 Messiah, their Prince, will bring their glory and ho-
 nour into it, and hither likewise shall the glory and
 honour of the nations be brought. Here the pure
 in heart shall be blessed in seeing and serving God,

* Rev. v. 12. 13.

while all the effects of the curse brought by sin are done away. Of the felicity of the Church does the beloved Apostle speak in such lofty strains, which can receive their full completion only in heaven, when Jesus shall gather together his elect to dwell and reign for ever with him.

But, instead of attempting farther to describe such happiness, suffice it to say, with blessed Paul, who himself was caught up, for a time, into the third heavens, where he now reigns in bliss with God, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him *;"—in order to shew the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the honour of his excellent majesty. The Apostle, indeed, adds, "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit;" yet can they be beheld only by the eye of faith, which at best is so dim as to see but darkly, and as through a glass, when compared with the clear beatific vision of God and divine things which is enjoyed above. An idea more noble, grand, and significant than this striking climax, or gradation, conveys, and that with inimitable beauty and simplicity, the human mind cannot form, nor the language of men express. Much hath the eye seen, and still more hath the ear heard, yet the mind of man can conceive what almost infinitely exceeds both, and, notwithstanding, the future blessedness of the saints surpasseth the whole. Though men and angels were to employ all their powers of intelligence, from the commencement of time, in devising and selecting all the possible requisites of happiness, yet would they

* 1 Cor. ii. 9.

not reach it; for this is the result of the deliberations of a Three-One-God, the effect of the combined efforts of the infinite and eternal attributes of Deity. Add to all this, its never-ending duration; and say, if *the undefiled in the way*, who have it all now in certain prospect, are and shall not be *blessed*.

THUS have I taken a transient survey of the *blessedness* annexed to the character specified in the text, as comprising what good men enjoy in the present life;—what their disembodied spirits are admitted to share in the separate intermediate state;—and what they shall enjoy in their whole man for ever, to commence at the consummation of this passing scene of things. What hath been suggested, however, so far from serving to give an adequate idea of it, in all or either of these views, is, like Moses' distant prospect of the land of Canaan, but very limited and imperfect. Nay, the most extensive view the human mind, aided by revelation itself, and that faith which is the evidence of things not seen, can take of such unbounded felicity, in its nature and extent, comes by far much shorter of the reality, than a rude delineation of a country in a map would be found to be when compared with the original. From this survey of the heavenly felicity, brief and imperfect as it is, we may, however, learn something of a theme so copious and sublime, that all that can be said or imagined by men or angels, by saints or seraphs, in the church below or the choirs above, must come infinitely short of a full display; for the love and grace of God, and the riches of Christ, which are there fully manifested and enjoyed, will remain unexhausted to all eternity. Let us ever bear this in mind, in all our inquiries about the

the glory and happiness to be one day revealed in, and bestowed upon the saints; and let the consideration so weigh with us, as to have a corresponding influence on our hearts and lives. — To the whole let me now subjoin a few *practical inferences*.

FROM this subject we may then justly infer, The true dignity, excellence, and blessedness of a character founded on gospel principles; and its happy tendency to recommend religion to the esteem and practice of those whose minds may be unhappily filled with groundless prejudices against it. Obdurate sinners, slaves to divers lusts and passions, may, like the deaf adder, shut their ears against the dictates of reason, and all the charms of heavenly wisdom; while the plain, yet persuasive eloquence of a holy conversation may force conviction on the heart. By the pure and peaceable fruits of righteousness God is glorified; men benefited, and, through his blessing, made better; the doctrine of our Divine Saviour adorned; the mouths of gain sayers stopped; and the hearts of the truly godly made glad. It is owing to the forbidding and unlovely constraint which some religious persons unaccountably assume, but more especially to the base and disingenuous conduct of hypocrites and mere nominal professors, that motely race, that the term *Christian* does not, at first view, carry with it all that is friendly, generous, great, dignified, heroic, and praise-worthy in human characters. The person who can be content to have his best actions hid from the public eye, and be chiefly influenced to and in the performance of them, by an invisible witness, and the prospect of things unseen, future and distant; — who can never prove ungrateful to his friend, or revengeful

vengeful to his enemy,—who is so far from returning evil for evil, or railing for railing, that he is disposed to overlook and forgive hatred and slander, and to pray for, and, as he finds opportunity, do good to those that despitefully use and persecute him; while he, at the same time, clearly perceives, and sensibly feels the nature and effects of such injurious treatment;—he who can thus think and act is certainly formed to promote the good of society, and the honour of human nature: yet so far are these and the like from being extraordinary virtues, that they are but the ordinary, the indispensable duties of a Christian, which every one, worthy of the name, must and will, as occasion offers, exemplify in his temper and carriage in life.—Who would not then wish to be *undefiled in the way*, especially when he reflects, that to this character is annexed the certain enjoyment of truest bliss? Something of the nature and magnitude of this blessedness, with their title to it, and absolute security of enjoying it through endless duration, hath been already suggested. The undefiled and unfading inheritance—the heavenly kingdom and immortal crown, are prepared by God the Father, purchased by God the Son, exhibited and secured in the promises of the well-ordered covenant, and reserved in heaven for the saints; while God the Spirit, in their hearts, is the sure pledge and earnest of their possessing these in due time, and the efficient cause of their growing meetness for them; and the exaltation of Jesus in their name, and as their head and surety, to prepare mansions for them, infallibly secures their being brought thither in their own complete persons. In this way all room for boasting is effectually taken away, that God might be owned to be all and in all

in

in the œconomy of grace, as in the kingdom of nature and providence.

From this subject it is also obvious to infer, The extreme folly and mistaken notion of those who look upon religion as a gloomy, joyless service,—and on its professors as a set of dull, melancholy, insipid creatures, strangers to all the innocent pleasures of life. So far is this, however, from being in fact the case, that we may aver, on the authority of God, and from the experience of his people in all ages, that Christianity debars its votaries only from such pleasures as, flattering as they may appear in anticipation, elude our fondest hopes, and, like the shadow of the human body, the more eagerly pursued, fly the swifter from us; such pleasures as, in their indulgence, degrade human nature into a level with the grazing tribes,—yea into a resemblance of, and kind of affinity with the fiends of hell; while, in reversion, it lays open such sources of pure, permanent, intellectual pleasures, as are fitted at once to delight, refine, and exalt our rational nature, all crowned with the testimony of a conscience void of offence, and a sense of the Divine favour and approbation, which administer a rich, a never-failing fund of joy and consolation. Those who give a different representation of the matter are very incompetent judges, and so not to be regarded, when they presume to speak evil of what they know not. They are either such as have never made trial of true religion, and so cannot speak from experience; or, if they have seemed to begin in the Spirit, have quickly turned back and ended in the flesh—in the indulgence and gratifications of corrupt nature. Besides, their prejudices in favour of the world, and the fleeting pleasures of sin and sense, render

render their testimony partial and suspicious, and therefore unworthy of credit. Granting they have a majority on their side; yet, when reason, the experience of the wisest and best in all ages, and the word of God declare against them, it is not difficult to judge what weight is due to their unfavourable report. No fewer than ten of the spies accorded with one voice in their unfair representation of the pleasant land of promise, while only two gave a just and faithful report of what they had seen: but did their number justify the Israelites in believing them rather than Caleb and Joshua? or invalidate the testimony of the latter? Indeed, neither their number nor confident assertions could screen either themselves or those that gave them credit from the just punishment of their infidelity, and contempt of the Divine goodness; and so shall it prove with all who follow the example of the one or the other. What claim, then, can these have to our assent who make free to tell us, that to be religious is the certain way to be unhappy? and how inexcusable, yea criminal, to lend them a willing ear, when they calumniate what they are utter strangers to, and misrepresent what they have never felt or experienced!

Nor does the subject we have been considering less clearly refute the fatal mistake of those who seek and expect happiness from vain amusements, sensual gratifications, and the momentary possession of transient wealth and honours; pursuing, with unremitting assiduity, an airy phantom, which hath often disappointed their fondest wishes, often eluded their most eager embrace. That these, even in their greatest variety, and fullest extent, cannot make a person happy, is evident from the verdict of Solomon, who
made

made the experiment, with every possible advantage on his side. He, notwithstanding, found all to be but vanity, and the pregnant source of disappointment and vexation of spirit. Besides the occasional hints to be met with in his other writings, the book of Ecclesiastes is wholly intended to illustrate and confirm this general proposition, with which he sets out, and of which he does not once lose sight throughout the whole: "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" With this perfectly coincides the judgment of his royal father, "Verily every man, at his best state;" or, as the margin reads it, his settled state, when he is fixed in the world, and thinks the mountain of his outward prosperity stands so strong that it shall never be moved, even then "is he altogether vanity."—"Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely, they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them*." He walketh in a vain shew, or image, as the word imports, intimating that their prosperity and enjoyments come as far short of what they pretend and the world imagines, as a mere image comes of the living original. With good reason, therefore, does the Apostle James caution and admonish the rich and affluent, not to rejoice in their elevated rank and station in life, or in the extent of their outward possessions, which may indeed command the gratifications of sense, and are frequently employed to procure the costly, and but too often criminal pleasures and amusements of the world; but in that they are made low, in the humble, meek, and self-denied dispositions of a mind renewed by

* Psal. xxxix. 5. 6.

grace, and regulated by the precepts and hopes of the gospel, as an evidence of their interest in the meek and lowly Jesus; because, as the flower of the grass, they must quickly resign all these external circumstances, about which those who know no better are so very solicitous, and pass away into a state of being where they can no longer please or adorn them. For no sooner is the sun risen with a burning or scorching heat, but the grass, which lately looked so fair and flourishing, withers and is dried up; and the flower thereof, with all its fading glories blasted, falleth to the ground, and the grace—all the lovely beauty of its delicate fashion or form, perisheth: "So," says he, "shall the rich man also fade away in his ways." What the world is most apt to covet and admire, however little adverted to by its votaries, experience shews to be transitory and fading as the grass, or even the flower of the field; and not seldom, like these fair but tender productions of nature, is consumed by the excess of those very causes to which it owes its existence and beauty.—By the like beautiful and expressive image does the Prophet illustrate the same important truth. The voice bids him cry, "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness," or glory, "thereof is as the flower of the field."—"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand for ever*." How delightful to reflect, that, while all dependance on created things, and these things themselves, are uncertain and precarious as the grass which soon withereth, and the flower of the field which quickly perisheth, the word of God in the gospel, its doctrines and

* Isaiah xl. 6. 8.

promises, which we are called to receive and confide in as the ground of our sure hope, should be permanent and immutable as his throne!—May we then share, and chiefly prize these durable riches and righteousness, and that honour which cometh from God, and is immortal as its Divine Author.

In short,—To seek and expect happiness in any way disapproved of Heaven, is not only offensive to God, but to the last degree vain and delusory with regard to ourselves. How great and fatal the influence of sin over the heart of man! How blind, how infatuated the human mind thereby! The expedients to which the sinner, in his wisdom, frequently hath recourse, in order to promote his happiness and establish himself and family in the earth, often forward his destruction, and prove the occasion of sorrow, disappointment, and misery to both. As a striking proof and illustration of this, I need only refer to the history of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who first reigned over the ten tribes, after their revolt from the house of David, and that of his successors, who, actuated by the same motives, followed his example. That prince, instead of relying, in the way of dutiful obedience, on the promise God made him by the prophet he sent to anoint him, in his carnal policy established idolatry in his kingdom by a law, in order to prevent his subjects from revolting to their former lord, and so to secure the succession to the throne in his own line and family. Hereby, however, he brought upon himself the very thing he wished to prevent,—procured the ruin of his family and kingdom, as Abijah, the prophet of the Lord foretold*; and so will it prove with all who are too wise in their own conceit

* 1 Kings xiv. 10. 11.

to seek prosperity and safety, real honour and permanent felicity, in God's way; "for who hath ever
 "yet hardened himself against him and prospered?" Whosoever will be a friend of the world, by adopting or falling in with such measures, and is determined, at all hazards, to pursue it as his chief good, the Apostle James tells us, is the enemy of God—is, by a just and necessary consequence from such conduct, now declared and adjudged, beyond controversy, to be such. Let all of this character and complexion read their doom, as recorded by the Prophet, "Therefore, as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame
 "consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because
 "they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and
 "despised the word of the holy One of Israel *." By the mouth of the same inspired writer does he farther address them, "Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall
 "be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye
 "shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but
 "ye shall be ashamed: behold, my servants shall sing
 "for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart,
 "and shall howl for vexation of spirit; and ye shall
 "leave your name for a curse †." The unhappy case and fatal disappointment of all who now indulge the fond hopes of future happiness, and yet neglect the alone way in which it can be obtained, he elsewhere emphatically describes: "They shall be even as when
 "a hungry man dreameth, and behold he eateth;
 "but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when
 "a thirsty man dreameth, and behold he drinketh;
 "but he awaketh, and behold he is faint, and his

* Isa. v. 24. † Isa. lxx. 13. 14. 15.

“foul hath appetite *.” They are driven away at death in their iniquity; or, as Eliphaz emphatically expresses it, “They perish by the blast of God, and “by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed †.” Both phrases import his wrath, and the ease and suddenness with which it takes effect. While such shall be their doom, portion, and the lot of their inheritance, *the undefiled in the way*, to use the language of the same seraphic Prophet, “Shall have their bread “given them, and their water sure: while, for their “use and refreshment, waters shall break out in the “wilderness, and streams in the desert: the parched “ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land “springs of water ‡.”

To conclude,—No less egregious in their nature, and pernicious in their consequences, are the mistaken views of those who persuade themselves, that a professed belief of the doctrines of the gospel, an external attendance on its instituted forms of worship, with a partial observance of its precepts, are sufficient to found their hopes of, and secure their title to happiness; while they overlook union to the Son of God by faith, an interest in his righteousness and intercession, for the acceptance of their person and services, and a vital principle derived from him, together with the sanctifying influences of his grace and Spirit, and that consequent purity of heart and integrity of life which natively result from such principles. That instruction which leads to, and keeps such false views in countenance, without a peradventure, causeth to err from the words of understanding, and is therefore to be ceased from, as dangerous and

* If. xxix. 8. † Job iv. 9. ‡ If. xxxiii. 16.—xxxv. 6. 7.

insnaring. Remarkable to this purpose are these words of inspiration: "The prophet that teacheth lies, " he is the tail. For the leaders of this people cause " them to err, and they that are led of them are destroyed *." It appears from the connexion, that their ecclesiastical leaders are rather intended; the false prophets who taught lies in the name of the Lord, and the corrupt priests and Levites who caused them to err from his truths and ways. Their being led of them, and seduced into error by them, did not, however, secure them from destruction, which merits the consideration of those who treat all zeal for the faith once delivered to the saints as a matter of little moment, or rather of hurtful tendency in religion. The margin reads it, "They that call this people " blessed cause them to err, and they that are called " blessed of them are swallowed up or destroyed." This may refer to those who officially pronounced the sacerdotal benediction; yet farther insinuates, that their doctrines were calculated to lead them to mistake their real state before God, to lull them asleep in a fatal security, and flatter them with a fond hope of happiness, while exposed to the Divine displeasure. They blessed them; that is, spoke peace, peace unto them, and pronounced them a happy people, as highly favoured of the Lord, at the very time the fierce wrath of Heaven was ready to break forth upon them for their sins. Thus they taught and prophesied smooth things, as if so authorized of God, and the people loved to have it so;—in which, alas! both are followed but by too many in every age, whose principles and practice seem to say, in opposi-

* Isa. ix. 15. 16.

tion to our Lord, Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to life, and many there be that find it! "There is a generation," says the royal proverbialist, "that are pure in their own eyes, "and yet is not washed from their filthiness *." To such, a way flattering to the native pride of man, and soothing to his prejudices and passions, may seem good and eligible; but the end of it is death. As that faith is vain and futile which doth not produce the peaceable fruits of righteousness, in a holy life and conversation; so these good works, however specious before men, who have no access to discern the heart, which proceed not from a vital union of the soul to Jesus, and an inward principle of spiritual life implanted by him, are spurious and counterfeit; and so, when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, by the all-seeing impartial Judge, shall be found wanting, and rejected. Neither the most specious moral virtues, detached from religion, nor the most flagrant profession of religion, without the power,—nor even both joined together, can constitute a character *undefiled* in the sight and estimation of God. He whose religious principles and motives are not drawn from the Bible, cannot perform acceptable obedience, which must ever flow from a faith that works by love and purifies the heart; much less the man who imbibes and disseminates tenets directly opposite to the doctrines of revelation, and, in their fatal influence, subversive of its sacred design and tendency. His life and practice, therefore, must be, in the sight of God, egregiously defective and wrong, whatever they may appear to human view, whose religious creed cannot, upon the whole, stand the test of the law and testi-

* Prov. xxx. 12.

mony; for nought but gospel principles and motives can influence to gospel holiness. To those who look upon soundness in the faith as a matter of small moment in religion, or what is no way essential to the acceptance of our religious services, and so take sanctuary in refuges of lies,—such as, the supposed goodness of their own hearts and native dispositions, the boasted uprightness and integrity of their motives and carriage in civil life, their sincerity in religion, and what not, to the neglect of that self-denied way of salvation revealed in the gospel;—to all of this complexion does God address himself by the Prophet, “Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow *.” Agreeable to this, he said, in the days of his flesh, “For judgment I am come into this world; that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind †:” that is, that they who are deeply sensible of their own ignorance, and the weakness and insufficiency of their intellectual powers, in the concerns of God’s glory and their own salvation, and so are desirous to be taught of him, and disposed from the heart to submit to his instruction, might be enlightened, by his word and Spirit, with saving discoveries of his will; and that those who confide in their own reason and understanding, as sufficient to direct and guide in the way to future happiness, and so, in the pride of their hearts, renounce all dependance on supernatural aid and illumination, might, as a judicial punishment, be

* Is. l. 11. † John ix. 39.

given up to the natural blindness and perverseness of their own hearts, and so left to wander and perish in their own counsels. Such principles as tend not to humble and debase man in his own eyes, to exalt and recommend the only Saviour, in all his saving characters, and to promote catholic, evangelical holiness, the most striking features of which are, supreme love and unreserved submission to God—Father, Son, and Spirit, and an unfeigned love to men, especially the household of faith, however flattering they may prove to the native pride of the human heart, and specious they may appear in the view of blinded carnal reason, are yet diametrically opposite to the gospel of Christ, and subversive of that genuine, unaffected goodness and piety it so forcibly inculcates and influences, and, of course, of the blessedness annexed to the character in the text. That wisdom, however, which is from above, is, and shall be justified of all her children; and “who so findeth her findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord: but he that sinneth against her wrongeth his own soul; and all they that hate her love death*.”—May Jesus, therefore, interest us in his righteousness, and sanctify us by his grace and Spirit, thus making us *undefiled in the way*; and, through him, may we now have access, by one Spirit, to the Father, that so we may be happy here, and hereafter completely blessed in having an abundant entrance administered unto us, at death and judgment, into his heavenly kingdom and glory, to be there for ever with him. *Amen.*

* Prov. viii. 35. 36.

DISCOURSE VI.

THE

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER AN HONOURABLE ONE.

I PETER ii. 7.

Unto you therefore which believe he is precious.

THAT the Son of God is not more universally esteemed, is owing to that fatal ignorance of his person and character which infests the human mind, and obscures his most excellent glory: for they that know his name will put their trust in him, and entertain the highest esteem and regard for him. Be an object ever so excellent in itself; or ever so interesting to our happiness, so long as it remains unknown there can be no desire after it. Hence the Author of all existence, the absolute possessor of heaven and earth, the underived source of unbounded felicity, and only Saviour of lost men, comes to be despised and rejected, even by those whose everlasting happiness depends upon a cordial reception of him; while the illusive vanities of time and sense gain the ascendant in the heart, and prescribe laws to the external deportment. While such are the sentiments and dispositions of the men of the world, who seek their honour and their portion here below, blessed be God there are some, even of our guilty race,
to

to whom this despised Saviour is dear and precious, and who are, and shall be honoured and enriched by him with all the inestimable privileges and immunities of a complete and everlasting salvation.

What the sacred historian says, in commendation of Absalom's graceful appearance and comely proportion, applies, with still greater propriety, and in a much nobler sense, to Jesus the Son of God, as clothed with our nature, and therein accomplishing our salvation: "In all Israel there was none to be so much praised for his beauty; for, from the sole of his foot, even to the crown of his head, there was no blemish in him *." Jesus is the source and centre of all perfection, in whom all created and uncreated excellencies meet. To comprehend or describe these, infinitely transcends all the powers of finite understandings, and all the efforts of human language. As possessed by him, they have a height and a depth, a length and a breadth, which the line of human reason cannot fathom, to which all the powers of imagination can never soar, nor eternity itself fully unfold! Whatever excellencies creatures may possess, from the highest to the lowest order, are but as so many faint rays derived from him, the perfection of beauty, in whom they all dwell without measure, and without alloy. How precious is he in the constitution of his person, in the execution of his Mediatorial work, and in his present exalted state, with all the blessings that flow from and are secured by it to his people! How precious his blood divine, which pacifies an offended God, cleanses from all sins, both in their guilt and defiling stains, and opens a new,

* 2 Sam. xiv. 25.

living,

living, and consecrate way to the holiest of all, whence we may come as children, with all the confidence of faith, to a throne of grace, for mercy to pardon, and grace to help in every time of need! To his church and saints on earth, he is a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty; and the glory, the temple, and the light of the Zion above. He is dear to his Father, as his beloved Son, in whom he is ever well pleased; dear to angels, as their beloved Lord and Sovereign; and to the Church of the First-born, whose names are written in heaven, he is and will be all in all for ever. No wonder then it should be said in the text, *Unto you therefore which believe He is precious*,—precious in what he is in himself, and in what he hath done, and stands engaged to do for you; precious in the admirable constitution of his person, as Emmanuel, God in our nature and on our side; in his saving offices; and the execution of them; in his important characters and endearing relations: in fine, precious in whatever is impressed with his authority, adorned with his image, and subservient to his glory.

That this precious *He* is none else but the Lord Jesus, is evident from the context, where he is designed a living, a chief corner-stone, elect, precious, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious; on whom, whosoever believeth shall not be confounded. The clause chosen for the subject of our present meditations, is an inference from what the Apostle had said above, as appears from the illative particle *therefore*, and seems to imply, in the connexion in which it stands, that real believers are of the same mind with respect to Christ, that God himself is; that as he is precious in the estimation of the Father, so is he likewise in theirs, and that for the very same

same reason. To those who love him with a supreme affection, it is enough to say, *He is precious*; for, without being more specific, this will sufficiently distinguish him from all others, and point him out at once as the object of their superlative regard. Hence the Church interrogates the watchmen, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" and Mary accosts the supposed gardener, "Sir, if thou have born him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him;" concluding, that an object who so deservedly engrossed their own thoughts and affection, would be sufficiently known by others without a more particular designation*.

But the original is still more expressive, in which he is said to be *preciousness* in the abstract. Many things may be precious, yet are they so only in a certain degree, and in certain circumstances, while their intrinsic value may be easily estimated; but Christ is at all times, and in every situation, precious, and altogether so. In the season of affliction, and at the hour of death, when the things of the world lose their value, and, like winter-brooks, fail us in the time of our greatest need; to those that put their trust in him, he can and will prove their refuge, their strength and very present help then, and in every time of extremity and trouble,—as rivers of water in a dry place, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land†. Have you not found him so, ye who believe on his name and rely on his grace and merits? and do not you hope he will prove so still? Of this hope will he never leave you to be ashamed; for what you have already experienced of his goodness is a sure

* Cant. iii. 3. John xx. 15. † Psal. xlvii. 1. II. xxxii. 2.

pledge and earnest of still greater and better things to come. The men of the world may despise and reject him—count him as a root sprung out of a dry ground, without form or comeliness*; but to you, whose eyes are enlightened from above to discern something of his worth and beauty, will he appear the chiefest among ten thousand—altogether and infinitely precious and lovely†. After all that men and angels can say in commendation of him, instead of thinking they exceed in his praise, you will be ready to own, with the queen of Sheba on a certain occasion, that the half, yea the thousandth part hath not been told. He is, therefore, dear and precious unto you who believe, and his name savoury as precious ointment poured forth. Though an unbelieving world should deem him a root sprung out of a dry ground—mean in his original and unpromising in his appearance—and treat him as such; by his own in every age is he esteemed as the Rose of Sharon and the Lilly of the valley‡; the Plant of renown, and Pearl of great price§; the root and the offspring of David, the bright and morning star||.

The text, according to our version, conveys a very important sense, perfectly agreeable to the analogy of faith, and presents, did we chuse to prosecute it, a very wide and beautiful field of discussion. But it may, with equal propriety, be rendered, *To you that believe He is an honour*; and is indeed so rendered on the margin of some of our Bibles. However the unbelieving part of mankind, whose eyes the god of this world hath blinded, may account of it, to be related to Jesus confers the highest honour, and all who have

* Isa. liii. 2. † Song v. 10. 16. ‡ Song ii. 1.

§ Ezek. xxxiv. 29. Matth. xiii. 46. ¶ Rev. xxii. 16.

the happiness to sustain that relation will doubtless deem it such. Though Christ, and him crucified, with the profession of faith in him and obedience to him, should be accounted, among the fashionable and polite, terms of reproach, if not subjects of ridicule; yet well may you, O Christian, glory in Jesus, and in his cross; for they reflect a real, a lasting glory upon you.

Or it may be rendered still more literally, by omitting the suppletive personal pronoun, which is not in the original text, *To you who believe, honour, or, there is honour.* The phraseology is concise and elliptic, yet very emphatic and expressive. The Apostle does not indeed specify the nature and extent of this *honour*, which is left to be inferred from the whole system of divine revelation, but speaks of it only in general, as what stands inseparably connected with an interest in the Son of God by faith, and to which the poorest and meanest believer has an indefeasible title. All of this description are now made sharers of the most substantial honour, in being built up as living stones in that spiritual temple whereof Christ is the foundation, and the chief stone of the corner, giving consistence, stability, and ornament, to the whole building; and also, in being constituted, in and for his sake, the habitation of God through the Spirit. In heaven, however, a still greater honour awaits them, which doth not yet appear, nor can now be estimated; for there they have, in certain prospect, durable riches and honours, treasures which waste not, an inheritance that fadeth not away, a kingdom which cannot be moved or torn from the happy possessor, and a crown of life, glory, and righteousness, with a diadem of beauty which shall for ever grace their temples. The honour and happiness thence resulting exceed
all

all that eye hath seen, ear heard, or the human mind can conceive, and all for the Redeemer's sake, through whom the Christian is promoted to this honour and felicity; for, says our text, *To you who believe there is honour, or, He is an honour.*

To this sense of the passage, which does equal justice to the original, it is meant to confine our attention in what follows, on which account such remarks have been suggested above as tend to illustrate the common translation. Nor is it my present purpose to consider that distinguishing part of their character to whom Christ is precious, or who are promoted to honour by him, whence they are denominated *believers*, however important this might be in itself. With regard to that faith which endears Christ to the soul, suffice it to observe, That it purifies the heart and regulates the practice, inspires and works by love to God, and whatever bears his image and is impressed with his authority. That faith, which is of the operation of the Holy Spirit, which avails to salvation, and has the promise of eternal life annexed to it, is a powerful and operative principle in the soul, constraining to holiness of heart and life; such a dependance on Christ, and belief of the doctrines of his gospel, as invariably produce corresponding effects. Where this is not the case, our pretensions to faith in Jesus and esteem for him, and all our hopes of honour and happiness from him, are vain and delusory; for, instead of being to us precious and an honour, we will be ranked among the number of his despisers and rejecters, for whom is reserved shame and everlasting contempt. They, and they alone, who cordially believe and embrace the truths and promises of the gospel, and Christ, as ex-

hibited in these, the hope of glory, studying, through grace, to live to his honour and praise, will he own, honour and bleſs, as the children of the moſt High, and heirs of a glorious immortality; for to them, and none elſe, does he appear truly precious and unſpeakably deſirable. To all of an oppoſite deſcription, be their character in other reſpects ever ſo diverſified, he is, as in the context, a diſallowed ſtone, a ſtone of ſtumbling, and a rock of offence, on which, if mercy prevent not, they ſtumble to their final ruin. While ſuch is the preſent ſtate and ſentiments, and the future proſpects of impenitent ſinners of every claſs, *To you who believe*, our text aſſures us, *there is honour*; the illuſtration of which faithful and comfortable ſaying I ſhall now, through Divine aid, attempt.

IN order to this, I need only conſtrast a few of the leading privileges and proſpects of real Chriſtians, with ſome of theſe things which are uſually allowed to confer honour and dignity among men; which done, ſome reflections from the ſubject, and application of it, will conclude the whole.—It is hoped, you will thence clearly ſee, that ſuch poſſeſs, even the pooreſt and moſt deſpiſed of them, an important pre-eminence over the whole race of the ungodly, not excepting the moſt prosperous and dignified among them, the word of God and the unbiassed dictates of reaſon being the rule and meaſure of our judgment.—May the truths here ſuggeſted ſerve, through the bleſſing of God, to edify and comfort thoſe whoſe character, in one eſſential point, is in the text briefly deſcribed,—to beget an abiding ambition in others to ſhare their diſtinguiſhing honour and privileges, and
powerfully

powerfully excite both to demean themselves, in all respects, as becometh what genuine believers in the Lord now, through grace, really are and have, and what they hope in future to be and enjoy.

IN civil society the king is considered as the fountain of honour, and those whom he prefers and dignifies with titles, are thence deemed among the noble and honourable, of the earth. If the power of conferring such honour and dignity is usually allowed to be an inseparable appendage of royalty, and claimed by earthly princes as their indisputable prerogative, would it not be the most daring presumption to deny the same privilege to the King of kings and Lord of lords, the absolute Sovereign of the universe? That God really exercises this prerogative is evident from his word, and supposed in the text; for believers are the persons whom the King of heaven delights to honour: "Them that honour me," says he, "I will honour; and where I am, there shall also my servants be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour*;" and, if he hath said it, who can reverse or disannul his word? It is obvious, that every species of honour must correspond to its source and origin, above which it cannot rise; for no being can confer on another what he does not possess himself. Hence all the honours derived from mere mortals, let their power and dignity be what they will, are, and in the very nature of things must be, like their authors, very limited, momentary, and perishing; whereas the honours conferred by God, being worthy of himself, are truly interesting in their na-

* 1 Sam. ii. 30. John xii. 26.

ture, perpetual in their duration, and attended with the most inestimable privileges to the happy possessor. When the former are no more, and all their annexed pomp and pageantry vanished like a dream, the latter will bloom, with unfading glory, eternal in the heavens. Without a hyperbole we may venture to affirm, that in as far as God, in his essence, attributes, and unlimited dominion, transcends man in his nature, authority, and extent of possession, so far do the honours he bestows on his people in time, and to the full and perpetual enjoyment of which he will in a little bring them, exceed those which can be conferred even by the greatest monarchs in the world upon their most special favourites. But, to be more particular,

I. Men consider themselves as deriving honour from their progenitors and connexions, if these have occupied a distinguished sphere in the world, and been possessed of any considerable share of its wealth. Though God hath made of one blood all the nations and individuals on the face of the earth*; yet a variety of circumstances in providence produce a difference, and give rise to not a few temporary distinctions in civil society; which diversity of rank and condition, as it answers important purposes to the community at large, so it seems to be agreeable to the will of God, and necessary to the ends of his present administration. Before mankind became deeply depraved in their morals, and wilfully blind to the essential difference between moral good and evil, through their strong and prevailing bias to and in favour of the latter, and had

* Acts xvii. 26.

thus.

thus learned, through a fatal perversion of the native dictates of the human heart, to affix the ideas of honour and greatness to adventitious circumstances, independent of intrinsic worth and excellence of character, these distinctions for the most part, if not always, took their rise from and were founded upon real merit; as is evident from the history of these once famous empires which flourished successively in the world, in their early periods and more prosperous state. But what was originally bestowed as the reward and badge of merit, came, through prescription, in time to be claimed by those whose degenerate morals form a sad contrast to that of their worthy ancestors, from whom they derive their name, their wealth, and boasted honours. Thus the most despicable of mortals may come to possess the dignified titles of the world: yet neither these nor their descent from the most worthy and honourable can make themselves truly so; for, mean-while, in the eye of reason, they may be the ignoble of the earth, the very refuse of mankind.

If, however, lineal descent from and a connexion with these who are deemed honourable by the world be allowed to confer honour among men, then, in this respect, I may say, in the words and upon the authority of the Apostle in the text, *To you therefore which believe there is honour.* Whoever professes to believe that there is a God, must at the same time admit that he is the greatest and the most honourable of all beings; and, consequently, that an interest in him and a near relation to him, will, in the very nature of things, imply proportional honour. This honour, however, great and ennobling as it is, have all the saints—poor Lazarus on the dunghill, covered with
fores,

fores, no less than Solomon on the throne, arrayed in all his royal apparel; for they are all the children of God, and heirs of future glory through an interest in the Redeemer. To this purpose, the Evangelist John tells us, that "they are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God *;" and the Apostle, writing to the Galatians, adds, to the same effect, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus†." Being thus children and sons of God, God sends forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, as a spirit of adoption, determining and inclining them to cry, Abba, Father, to accept of him, confide in him, and draw near unto him as their Father in heaven; while, by his gracious agency, they are endued with dispositions, animated with hopes, and enabled to maintain a line of conduct becoming their heavenly extraction. By virtue of this happy change in their state and dispositions, or the renovation of their nature through the grace of the Spirit, and acceptance of their persons through faith in the Lord that bought them, they come to stand in the most near, endearing, and important relations to the adorable and ever-blessed Trinity. The God and Father of all is, in a sense peculiar to themselves, their God and Father; the eternal Son of his essence their ever-faithful friend and elder brother; and the Spirit of all grace their sanctifier, advocate, and comforter. If from this interest in God, and relation to him, the Apostle John infers his inconceivable love to his people, may we not, by a parity of reasoning, likewise infer from it, that distinguishing and matchless honour which

* John i. 13. † Gal. iii. 26.

stands inseparably connected therewith? "Behold, what manner of love;" or, as we may say with no less propriety, "Behold, what manner of *honour* the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God *," constituted such by an act of grace, and promoted to their privileges and prospects in time and through eternity! This is not a mere honorary title, to which nothing substantial is annexed, like many of these upon which the sons of men value themselves and others; but an important privilege, fraught with the most genuine honour and inestimable blessings. Our Lord hath taught his people—all who in truth believe in him, submit to his authority, and copy after his example,—in that form of prayer which goes under his name, to address God as their Father in heaven †; and, after his resurrection, says to Mary, "Go tell my brethren, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God ‡." Well then might King David account the saints on earth the excellent, or, as some render it, the honourable, though found among the poorest of his subjects, and as such express his delight and complacency in them §. "The righteous," Solomon tells us, "is more excellent than his neighbour ||;" for God makes all of that description excellent by his imparted grace, whence they become partakers of a new and divine nature, are precious in his sight and honourable, as his jewels and peculiar treasure, while he, their God, is their glory, and to them a diadem of beauty. To this, what are all the honours that can flow from a connexion even with the greatest of men? Is it possible that any

* 1 John iii. 1. † Matth. vi. 9. ‡ John xx. 17.

§ Psal. xvi. 3. || Prov xii. 26.

can give these a decided preference, but such mean sordid souls as have their names written in the earth, as the Spirit of God expresses it *, and their hearts and portion there? Let such, if they will, glory in their earthly connexions, and in the imaginary honour derived from them; but let the real Christian glory in his God, in his relation to him as a son and heir of grace, and endeavour to walk worthy of his noble and divine birth, and super-eminent prospects.

As the genuine believer has God, the source and centre of all being, happiness, and perfection, for his God and Father, which implies the greatest honour of which a creature is capable; so, by virtue of this endearing and dignifying relation, he stands intimately connected with all that bear his image and retain their allegiance to him. The people of God, be their situation and circumstances in life ever so diversified or opposite, are yet all related to one another, as members of the same august community, and children of the same grand family, of which the supreme Lord of all is the immediate head and Father. The bonds of mere human relation, which originate from the present state of things, and are confined thereto, may, with propriety, be designed the ties of blood; but the bonds of grace, by which the spiritual system is knit together, and to Christ its glorious head, are spiritual in their nature, extend to the whole man, and shall never be dissolved. This mysterious and important bond of union implies a similarity of dispositions, pursuits, and prospects, by which it is also much endeared; and consists in a vital connection of

* Jer. xvii. 13.

the soul to God, the source of life and happiness, and in a gracious union with and attachment to all his regenerated children, by the ties of Christian amity, and the agency and inhabitation of the same Spirit, as a spirit of adoption and brotherly love. Hereby all the saints of God, from righteous Abel to the last of that description, stand related to each other by ties more intimate, endearing, and indissoluble, than any which can subsist in civil society; and, these kept in view, every other distinction will appear trivial and momentary. Is it no honour then to be thus related to these excellent ones, whom God himself owns as children, and of whom the world is not worthy, millions of whom are already exalted to be princes, kings, and priests to their God and Saviour in the realms of bliss and glory above?

But besides that mutual and lasting connection which subsists between themselves, real Christians can also claim relation to angels, as the first-born sons of the same family, fellow-sharers with them of the same blessed immortality, and their future associates in that grand community of which Christ, their and our common Lord, is the Head and Sovereign. Great, glorious, and mighty as these are, "Are they not all," says the Apostle, "ministring spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" A Job, stripped of every worldly comfort, and lying in ashes,—a poor pious Lazarus, in his forlorn condition at the rich man's gates, are objects which attract their attention, and engage their beneficent care in life and death; while a Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sitting upon his throne, and a

* Heb. i. 14.

haughty Dives, clothed with purple, and faring sumptuously every day, are objects of their pity, contempt, and pious indignation. What an honour and privilege, then, to share the friendship and claim connection with such holy, noble, and beneficent beings, that far transcend the greatest and wisest of men in every excellent quality and divine endowment! If these love the Christian, encamp, as the Psalmist expresses it, round about him *, minister to him in life, and conduct him safe at death to the mansions prepared for him, where he shall associate with them for ever, may he not make light of the neglect and contempt of those, the eyes of whose mind the god of this world hath blinded, so that they can see at best but with eyes of flesh? The good-will and esteem of one of these blessed spirits must be unspeakably preferable to the esteem and friendship of all the ungodly sinners upon the face of the earth, be they rich or poor, noble or ignoble, kings or subjects; for the fruits and effects which flow from these will scarce admit a moment's comparison. Though in order to enjoy this privilege, they must indeed renounce a present world, whose love and friendship and that of the ever-blessed God are quite incompatible, yet need they not, however, regret the sacrifice; for, in return, they are admitted into an honourable alliance with a better. Farther,

II. Wealth and extent of property are allowed among men to confer honour and respectability on the possessor; for these ideas they naturally associate. While the fairest virtues are often so obscured and hid under the vail of poverty, that they escape the

* Psalm xxxiv. 7.

public eye, or perhaps only procure contempt and hatred to their owner; wealth and influence throw a varnish over the foulest crimes, and raise the most worthless characters into apparent estimation. Hence, Solomon tells us, "The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich hath many friends*." The opulent and wealthy, whatever may be their character, shall not want professed friends, such as they are, to offer the incense of adulation to their supposed merit and short-lived honours, while the world smiles upon them, and prosperity seems to have marked them out for her peculiar favourites. All this, however, is but a very precarious criterion from which to form our judgment of true worth and excellence, what alone entitle to respect and honour; for how often is there more real honour and dignity of character to be found with the poorest peasant, or the meanest mechanic, than with many of those who move in the higher circles of life, possess more of this world than heart could wish, and affect to be stiled, The great, the noble, and honourable of the earth! These things notwithstanding, however much sought after and prized among men, God often bestows, in the course of his common providence, as what he makes very small account of, upon such as are still obnoxious to his justice, and have little or no prospect of ever seeing his face in glory; while the heirs of a happy immortality, of an immutable kingdom and unfading crown, may be permitted, like their divine Master, to want even the necessary comforts and accommodations of life. Strange indeed as it is, yet is it a melancholy truth, confirmed by daily observation, that those who most liberally share the bounties of indul-

* Prov. xiv. 20.

gent Heaven, have in all ages, a few instances excepted, most deeply tainted their blood with treason and rebellion against it. In this, however, the scripture is verified which saith, "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them *," and such are all impenitent sinners in God's sight and estimation. Disgrace and woe is the future, the certain portion of those who now receive their honour and consolation.

But it may perhaps be objected, If wealth and extent of property are supposed to confer honour, how can the followers of Jesus come in here for a share, who are well known to be in general poor, mean, and despised in the world, seldom inheriting either its honours or its riches? It is, indeed, readily granted, that the followers of him who for their sake became poor, are, for the most part, herein conformed to him. But then, have you never read, "That God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him †?"—"That to the poor the gospel is preached ‡;" or, as the original more emphatically expresses it, *The poor are evangelized*; that is, savingly enlightened by the gospel, and made sharers of its inestimable blessings. These are equally free and accessible to the poor as to the rich, and the person who once obtains an interest in them, be his outward condition ever so indigent, is enriched in the most important sense, and that beyond the power of the world, time, or ages, to impoverish him. Christ, his prophets and apostles, were poor and despised in the world in their day, often having neither silver nor gold; yet made many rich and honourable for eternity §. "A good man," says the wise king of Israel,

* Prov. i. 32.

† James ii. 5.

‡ Matth. xi. 5.

§ Acts iii. 6.

"leaveth

“leaveth an inheritance to his children’s children*,” which does not always hold in a literal sense, nor is it to be so understood; for seldom do such add house to house and land to land; yet in a moral and spiritual sense it never fails. In their good instructions, pious example, and fervent prayers, godly parents leave their children such a portion as, if not wanting to themselves, will prove more valuable and lasting than thousands of gold and silver.

Granting, then, they should indeed possess no temporal wealth or extent of property, to derive honour and influence to their name; will the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, however, with all their happy effects on the whole man be allowed to impart no honour? Nay, do not these make them more honourable, as well as more excellent, and that in the truest and most important sense, than those who are utter strangers to them, be their circumstances in other respects what they will? To refuse this would be, in fact, to deny the plainest dictates of reason and common sense; and, indeed, there are few but will, in theory at least, admit this much, though in their general intercourse with mankind they seem to deny it. Of this mind was the more enlightened part of the heathen world; for they professed to esteem virtuous dispositions as the truest wealth, and most valuable property. The most eminent of their philosophers divided their chief good, or what in their judgment constituted the essential ingredients of human happiness, into the goods of the body, the goods of fortune, and the goods of the mind; to the latter of which they gave a decided preference. Hence you

* Prov. xiii. 22.

hear them often exclaim to this effect, in their writings, "Strip us of all our earthly possessions, and yet
 " we are still rich, possessed of a treasure in our own
 " mind, of which the world cannot rob us, and which
 " alone deserves to be called ours, as being always in
 " our own power, and without the reach of any one
 " else to deprive us of it!"—With respect to what they
 called the goods of the body and fortune, they very
 justly reasoned, That as these were not so much in a
 man's own power, or under the direction of his will,
 he was not to be the more esteemed merely for the
 possession of them, nor the less thought of for the
 want of them; unless when this was the result of his
 own improper conduct. How full to this purpose
 that notable saying, which hath been so often quoted
 and admired as an oracle, "Virtue is the truest no-
 " bility, as making us resemble the immortal gods—
 " the most honourable beings in the universe!" No
 doubt, many of their high encomiums on virtue and
 the virtuous man proceeded from pride and vanity, the
 predominant passions of all merit-mongers in every
 age, and were, considering the extreme deficiencies
 of what they deemed a complete moral character,
 carried to the most extravagant height,—making the
 virtuous man, in some respects, more perfect than
 the objects of their religious worship; because, say
 they, he is so of choice, but they of necessity of na-
 ture. From whatever motives they may have acted
 in their private conduct, it is evident they, in theory
 at least, deemed a virtuous temper and deportment
 a greater honour to the possessor than any adventi-
 tious circumstance whatever. If the virtues and en-
 dowments of the mind were thus allowed, by mere
 heathens, to constitute the most valuable part of our
 possessions.

possessions, and to confer the truest nobility, will such as call themselves Christians, and profess to draw their rules of judgment and maxims of conduct from the Bible, once presume to say, that bodily accomplishments and perishing riches are more important in themselves, and impart more real honour and dignity to their owner, than either mental excellencies or moral dispositions? The former terminate in the outward man, which we derive from the earth, and by which we are allied to the beasts that perish; but the latter in that immortal part of our nature which we receive, by immediate inspiration, from God himself, and in which alone we can resemble him and other intelligences. The human soul is the offspring of Deity; for God is the Father of our spirits, which he forms within us without the intervention of any second cause, and this, renewed by grace, presents his moral image,—the chief glory and dignity of our rational nature. Hereby we are fitted for the perpetual vision and fruition of God, resemble and are allied to angels, and rendered capable of sharing their exalted and immortal felicity. To give the preference to the former, then, and what concerns it, however common, would indeed be to forfeit the Christian character and hope; yea, to disgrace humanity itself. Are not such as have their taste and judgment thus fatally depraved and perverted degraded, in a moral and spiritual sense, beneath the humiliating condition of the haughty monarch of Babylon, who was driven from the society of men to graze, for a time, with his fellow-commoners of the field and forest*; for, so remaining, God will soon banish them from

* Dan. iv. 32. 33.

his presence and the glory of his power, as the unclean goats and vile dogs that can never enter within the gates of the new Jerusalem.

The gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit have this special advantage, among others, over the wealth and possessions of a present world, that they refine and exalt our nature, conform us to God, the source and pattern of consummate perfection, and thus, while they yield the most sublime and rational pleasure in their exercise, fit us for fellowship with the great Father of our spirits both here and hereafter. While the boasted acquisitions of earth, through the innate depravity of our nature, make men, for the most part; worse, and often transform them into incarnate devils; the inestimable gift of renewing and sanctifying grace, bestowed upon every real Christian in the present state, produces a change so sacred and interesting, that they are said in scripture to be made partakers of a divine nature. Thus, while the world may be possessed (for enjoyed we cannot say), and that in the most ample manner, the possessor may be still unhappy, and often the merest trifles have power enough to make him so; like Haman, who could find no enjoyment in his accumulated wealth, great preferment, dignified station, and numerous relatives and dependants, while one poor despised foreigner refused him obeisance. When recounting these, "All this," adds he, "availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the King's gate *." In this he has many to resemble, him in every age, among those who hold the first rank in civil life. While the humble believer in Jesus, in every supposable condition

* Esther v. 13.

and circumstance, is happy in his God, and in the testimony of a good conscience, and possessed of a treasure which derives the truest honour to the possessor, and of which neither earth nor hell can rob him; the most prosperous sons of vice are utter strangers to solid peace and joy, tossed to and fro, the sport of every irregular appetite and passion; like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, when agitated and roused by stormy winds. What constitutes conformity to God, and fits for the fruition of him, must render all who enjoy it, the excellent or honourable ones of the earth, more so in themselves, and in the eye of enlightened reason, than such as are destitute of this, whatever they may in other respects possess; for “he that is slow to anger,” says Solomon, “is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city*.” It must indeed be so, if the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is allowed to be in God’s sight of great price†.”

Permit me here farther to observe, That the graces and virtues which constitute the complex, yet amiable character of a Christian, are, and must be, inestimably precious in themselves, and impart the most real and substantial honour and happiness to all in whom they prevail. This may be justly inferred from the price laid down for them,—not such mean, corruptible things as silver and gold; for all the wealth of time could not redeem one soul, but the precious blood of the Son of God, the alone adequate ransom;—from the consideration, that they are the gifts of God to his adopted and beloved children, and the permanent result of the gracious operation and con-

* Prov. xvi. 32. † 1 Pet. iii. 4.

tinued residence of his Holy Spirit in their hearts;— as also, from their important and everlasting consequences: “Wilt thou set thine eyes,” says the royal Proverbialist, “upon that which is not? for *riches*,” mark the expression, certainly “make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle towards heaven*.” Let these be accumulated with ever so much labour and application, and kept with ever so much care and anxiety; yet one day or other, and that not far distant, will they take their final flight to their next transitory residence, while the distress and disappointment of their owners must bear proportion to their confidence in them, and expectations from them. The greatest and most opulent on earth, if they aspire no higher, can boast only of perishing riches, an earthly inheritance, a corruptible crown, a kingdom that may be moved, and must soon be resigned to another: But the treasures God bestows on all and each of his people are the durable and unsearchable riches and honours of Christ, treasures inexhaustible and eternal in the heavens, “where neither moth nor rust can corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal†.” The inheritance of the saints is incorruptible and unfading; their crown glorious and immortal; and their kingdom and felicity in it, immutable and everlasting. Having God himself for their portion, in enjoying him, they enjoy all things: Hence the victorious in the Christian warfare are said to inherit all things‡; and the Apostle addresses real believers, “All things are yours, and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s§,” which sufficiently accounts for the extensive grant.

* Prov. xxiii. 5. † Mat. vi. 20. ‡ Rev. xxi. 7.

§ 1 Cor. iii. 21. 23.

If wealth and extensive property are allowed among men to reflect honour upon the possessor, must it not be granted, from what hath been suggested above, that the real Christian, the genuine believer in the Son of God, is not, in this respect, destitute of honour; yea rather is invested, even in the present state, with the truest honour?

But to all this it may perhaps be objected, Why, the world gives its possessions in hand; and, consequently, the honour resulting from them is present, whereas the inheritance of which the professed followers of Jesus make so much boast, is allowed to be future, and therefore only in hope, on which account it can confer no present honour. That the men of the world thus reason, if they ever allow themselves to reason at all about the matter, is evident from the choice they make, and the objects they chiefly pursue.

Not to mention how precarious the tenure is by which the world holds its highly valued possessions, nor how very unsatisfactory its enjoyments are in their own nature, both which are daily verified in the experience of its votaries, whence they have no great reason to boast when it smiles most upon them. Although it is readily granted, that the Christian's main prospects are future, even beyond the boundaries of time and the grave; yet must we so far deny the objection, as to affirm, that the people of God possess, even in this present life, though but the state of their minority and education for a better, what they would not exchange for the wealth of kings and provinces, and what all the treasures in the world could not purchase. Their present privilege in this respect hath been shewn already, as constituting an
essential

essential part of their Christian dignity, and will not this be allowed to confer a present honour, an honour not indeed of man's making or bestowing, but which cometh from God, and for that very reason the more to be prized? Are they not now adopted into God's family, constituted by faith his children, and made sharers of his regenerating grace? whence they can, on the best ground, claim relation to him as their Father in heaven, to Jesus as their Lord and Husband, their friend and brother, and to the Eternal Spirit of all grace, as the efficient principle of their faith and holiness, their comforter and sealer, through whose agency, and immediate residence, they become the habitation and temples of the living God, and obtain a growing meetness for the heavenly inheritance, with a sure pledge and earnest of it: "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons and children of God, and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ*." Must not their eyes be strangely blinded by the god of this world, and their hearts callous to every thing pious, virtuous, and praise-worthy, who would not deem this a present honour, an honour preferable to any of which the world can boast? Let God be credited as true, though this should make every man a liar.

But, admitting the objection in its full force, such a consequence will by no means follow. Even granting the Christian's possessions were all future, and only in hope; yet, reasoning from the approved maxims of the world itself, these would entitle to present honour. The Apostle indeed observes, "That an

* Rom. viii. 14. 17.

“heir, under age, differs not from a servant, though “he be the apparent lord of all*,” yet this can only respect the necessary restraints of education, and his dependance on his parents or tutors for what he may at present receive of his future inheritance. Mankind in general agree in shewing such, even in their state of minority, all that respect and honour to which their high birth and extensive prospects entitle them, though death may soon cut off these prospects, and blast all the flattering hopes they inspire. A prince is treated as the apparent heir of the crown, though the possession of it be distant, and only an object of hope, without any absolute security of his ever obtaining it. If this is agreeable to the approved maxims and established customs of the world, what good reason can be assigned, why the future prospects of God’s people should not derive to them even in the present state, an honour, in some degree proportionable to their vast magnitude, and inestimable worth? Doubtless, it will be so with all who give the word of God full credit, and have not their eyes blinded by the god of this world; and, with respect to these of an opposite description, their verdict here is as little to be regarded, as that of the blind when judging of colours, or of the deaf when describing the nature and modifications of sound.

But, with regard to the prospects of real Christians, they have this special advantage over all the prospects of a present world, that the actual and perpetual possession of them is secured with as much absolute certainty as the promise and the oath of God can make it, these two immutable things in which it is impos-

* Gal. iv. 1.

sible for him to falsify himself, or disappoint the hopes they inspire. Does not this single consideration mightily enhance their value, and give them an infinite superiority over all the acquisitions of earth, which perish in the using—and are at best so inadequate to the desires and capacities of an immortal soul—so very precarious in the possession, and which so often change their proprietors? Though what the believer now possesses, by virtue of his heavenly birth, is but as the first fruits to the full harvest—the few first-ripe grapes to the whole vintage; yet, as these were to the Israelites of old a pledge, earnest, and anticipation of the plenty that followed, so are the gifts and graces of the divine life here a pledge, earnest, and fore-taste of heaven itself to every renewed soul. To use a trite, but expressive simile, Grace is but glory in the bud, and glory is but grace full blown. Is not the Christian character then an honourable one, when you consider what it now implies, and what stands inseparably connected therewith in future? The consideration of some other particulars with the improvement of the subject, shall be reserved to another opportunity.—Mean-while, be it our chief concern and most earnest prayer, that God would bestow upon us that faith which recommends and endears Jesus to the soul, and to which is infallibly annexed the most precious honour and substantial blessings both here and hereafter. For this important purpose, may the powerful influence of his Spirit accompany what hath been now suggested in your hearing. *Amen.*

DISCOURSE VII.

T H E

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER AN HONOURABLE ONE.

I PETER ii. 7.

Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: or, as in the original, Unto you who believe there is HONOUR.

THERE is a certain airy phantom which hath acquired the designation of *Honour*, and to which appeals are often made, as the ultimate arbiter of right and wrong, of what ought and ought not to be said or done in certain cases. This famed idol of the Proud and Great, usurps the place, and arrogates to itself the sacred claims of Deity; and so zealous are many to ascertain these, that they will not scruple to sacrifice their most important concerns at its shrine, and to make its altars smoke even with human blood, while themselves sustain the part of priest and victim. In this respect, never was there a deity revered among the most barbarous nations more cruel and insatiable, nor worshippers more sanguine and blood-thirsty than its votaries. It carries with it, and discovers evident marks and striking features of its extraction and descent,—that it is the brood of the infernal pit, begotten by him who was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in

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the truth *; while its zealous adorers, by their blind veneration, announce themselves the subjects of that prince of darkness, the heirs of hell, and the children of future wrath. As it derives its origin thence, so it natively tends to these dark abodes, often lodging its guests and abettors in the chambers both of the first and second death. Instead of deserving the name of *Honour*, unless in the common acceptation of that term in the modish world, it is a badge of infamy and disgrace, an execrable relick of Gothic barbarism and ignorance, which marks out the man who is swayed by it as under the despotic yoke of the most diabolic passions,—pride, resentment, and revenge; and sunk, with all his pretences to honour, beneath the very brutal creation. It may be said of it, as Solomon says of sin in general, that it is a reproach to any people † among whom it is permitted with impunity to prevail; and if to any, even an unenlightened and barbarous people, how much more so to a civilized and Christian nation? How often is that illusive phantom the world miscalls *honour*, made to subserve the very worst of purposes! Do not we frequently see those who are scarce remarkable for any thing but their vices, presume to plead this in vindication of the blackest crimes? This specious principle cannot, sure, proceed from God, the alone original fountain of all true *honour*; for he hath declared his unalterable purpose to recompense it with shame and everlasting contempt; but must flow from the native pride of the human heart fatally perverted, and that proud malignant spirit, the interests of whose infernal kingdom it promotes. Can that deserve the

* John viii. 44. † Prov. xiv. 34.

name of *honour* which is founded on the ruins of virtue and conscience, and subversive of the most valuable sensibilities of the human heart? that which wantonly violates the plainest dictates of reason, the first and most deeply rooted principle of our nature,—the law of self-preservation; and at the same time tramples upon the two great radical principles of religion and morality, the love of God and our neighbour? Need we hesitate a moment, to pronounce those who can allow themselves to commit such daring outrage against God and nature, against themselves and fellow-men, to be far more deserving of a capital punishment than the poor unhappy wretch who expires on a gibbet, a spectacle of public infamy, for having invaded his neighbour's property? However such may escape deserved punishment from men—from the hand of the civil magistrate, who is God's viceroy to be a terror to, and to punish evil doers; yet shall not the Lord our God suffer them to escape his righteous judgment.

With regard to many who vainly arrogate to themselves, and are, perhaps, complimented by the polite world, who expect in their turn to be repaid in kind, with the title of *men of honour*; and who seem to think, that in acting up to this character they may trample upon all law human and divine—debauch their neighbour's wife, the daughter of their friend, and make himself such an offender for a word, that nothing short of his blood can expiate the supposed crime; suffice it to say, that for all these things God will one day bring them into judgment, and make them as mean and contemptible in the eyes of an assembled universe, as they are at present high and mighty in their own.

I am naturally led to the above remarks from the subject under consideration, and embrace the opportunity it presents of bearing open and public testimony against a custom * at once so detestable and barbarous

* The author here alludes to the barbarous and shamefully prevalent custom of *Duelling*,—a custom which disgraces the annals of the British nation, and prematurely sends so many of our fellow-creatures to their long-home, and their poor souls into the world of spirits—there to appear before God, the august Judge of all, under the aggravated guilt of murder and suicide, besides the accumulated load of all their other transgressions. It is indeed truly amazing to see those who have so little prospect of happiness beyond the grave, so wantonly prodigal of their enjoyments in the present state, and of life itself—the basis of them all! Is it because their present dear-bought pleasures cannot countervail the unavoidable evils of life? or because they consider themselves such despicable beings that society will not miss them, that they make such furious haste to rid the world of a nuisance? Or is it, that they wish to hasten that damnation they so often imprecate, though of itself it lingereth not, and so to reach, by mutual wounds, these doleful shades where peace and rest shall never come!—What our Lord addressed to the Jews applies here but with too much propriety, “Ye are of your father the devil, who was a murderer from the beginning, and his work herein ye do.”—Though this savage practice were to obtain universal suffrage, yet can we scarce conceive a more striking proof of the humiliating blindness and depravity of the human mind, than is discovered in deeming what is in itself so barbarous and disgraceful, honourable and praise-worthy. Though pride may inspire, passion support, and custom sanction such false principles of honour, may we not, however, suppose, that even those who are instigated by their influence to approve and adopt measures so criminal and inhuman, are yet, in the moments of sober thought and cool reflexion, forced to condemn them?—Though the sons of pride and dissipation should attempt

ous in itself, and so fatally pernicious in its consequences; at a time when it so much prevails, to the
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attempt to keep these in countenance, yet must unbiassed reason pronounce them disgraceful to humanity, pernicious to the cause of virtue, and inimical to society.—To insult the great Author of life, by exposing it without his call; to brave death with a more than brutal insensibility; to violate the most endearing and the most sacred ties; to offer the highest injury to society; and to treat the solemn scenes of futurity as the empty dreams of some deluded visionary, might suffice to consummate the character of a fiend of hell, to which pride, malice, and resentment assimilate. If this be honour, and to act honourably, who would not exclaim, with the Patriarch, “My soul, come not thou into their secret, into their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united with them!” —“Such Gothic appeals to cold iron,” as one somewhere justly observes, “are no better proofs of a man’s honour and veracity, than hot iron and burning ploughshares were of female chastity;” and we may add, neither the one nor the other could take its rise but where society was still in a very rude and uncultivated state.—Does not the prevalence of a custom so savage and barbarous tarnish the glory of an enlightened age, and loudly call for the immediate interference of the Legislature? —Is it not much to be wished, that the late imminent danger and narrow escape of one of the Princes, in acting up to this supposed *punctilio of false honour*, would induce his Royal Sire to interpose his authority, in order effectually to suppress a practice so detestable and diabolic, which might not prove so difficult as some may be ready to imagine?—Though I presume not to dictate, yet, was it made ignominious death to give or accept a challenge (and, if viewed in the light of reason and scripture, it will be found to deserve this), may we not venture to predict, that few duels in that case would be fought? Or, should this be thought too severe, though indeed not more so than the nature of the crime merits, and its fatal prevalence seems to require, might not some expedient be found out and adopted, which would render this in-

no small reproach of our nation and religion, and the wounding of the hearts of many; while our civil rulers,

human practice as disgraceful as it is at present deemed honourable? Were such as countenance or go into it to be treated as a kind of out-laws, and their company shunned as enemies to society, and to the most sacred rights of human nature, the laurel of honour would be sought for in paths more consonant to wisdom and justice, and more congenial to the dignity and prospects of man?—The instance above alluded to might have produced consequences of the most serious nature to the community. Had not gracious Heaven, in compassion to the Royal Family and these lands, mercifully prevented these, our benign Sovereign might have been soon reduced to a worse state than that from which he so lately emerged, and then our sky would have been once more overcast with dismal clouds and portending storms.—Those who imbibe the maxims and imitate the customs of a present vain world, without regarding their propriety, or once adverting to their consequences, may applaud such conduct as brave and courageous; and, it must be owned, were these admitted as the rule and standard of our judgment on this point, such firmness of mind may be discovered on these occasions, as, if exerted in a better cause, might be justly termed heroic bravery; but, when viewed in the light of divine truth, we must pronounce it foolhardiness in the extreme; and, indeed, none who regard the dictates of cool reason, or believe the sacred oracles, will approve of such practices, much less countenance and take an active part in them.—When menials claim the privilege of deciding their petty quarrels by duel, instances of which are frequently mentioned in the public papers, one would think this might suffice to bring it into disrepute. How mean and paltry must that honour be, of which the most pitiful wretch in the nation may claim a share, providing he is fool-hardy and wicked enough to expose his own life and attack that of his fellow-mortal without any just cause!—Men may indeed assume the garb of honour, yet, as in the fable, the ass's ears will sometimes appear from under the lion's skin; for what can

kers, these guardians of the laws, lives and liberties of the people, seem disposed to wink at it, though sacredly bound so to exert and employ the power lodged in them, That they who thus shed man's blood, should, according to the divine mandate, have their own blood shed by man*, having been duly tried, found guilty of murder, and sentenced to the death they so richly deserve. For this and other things, however,—for the much innocent blood found in our skirts, will God take his own time and way to plead; for they have a language in his ears, and claim the interposition of his rectoral justice.

But while so many counterfeits, and mere pretenders to honour abound in the world, are there none to be found, who have a just claim to it? Yes, verily; for our text says, *Unto you who believe there is honour.* Every genuine Christian, acting in character, is a man of real honour, be his condition and prospects in life what they will, if we but allow God to be judge, and his word to determine.—What hath been, and

can betray a more despicable cowardice, than to brave Heaven, because we have not sufficient fortitude to bear, or grace, or even good nature enough to forgive some petty affront from a fellow-mortal. With what sentiments, may we suppose, will beings of a superior order, and more enlarged understanding, view such conduct in the sons of earth? “He that is slow to anger,” says Solomon, “is better than the mighty: and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city,” Prov. xvi. 32. While all the children of pride, as God long since told Job, have Leviathan over them for their king, Job xli. 34. who is, consequently, more honourable than they, in as much as a king is more noble and dignified than his subjects.

* Gen. ix. 6.

may be farther suggested in the progress of the subject, it is hoped may satisfy every candid mind on that head. With regard to those who are ever for proving themselves men of honour, not indeed by the mode and expedients reason suggests and Christianity approves, but by the mere exertions of bodily strength, and an acquired dexterity in shedding human blood, hereby discover themselves unfit to be reasoned with, and more meet to be sent to the field and forest, there to give proof of such honour, than to civilized society, whose enemies they hereby declare themselves to be.

IN order to illustrate the truth contained in the text, it was proposed to contrast a few of the leading privileges and prospects of real Christians, with some of these things which are usually allowed to confer honour and dignity among men.

I have already shewed, at considerable length, that if honourable progenitors and connexions,—and wealth and extent of property, are supposed to entitle to honour and respect in the world, then may we say, in the language of our text, *Unto you who believe there is honour.*

III. As connected with these, and expressive of them, I may farther observe, that rich apparel, splendid retinue, and costly provision, are also allowed to derive honour to the possessor. How dignified does Solomon appear in the number, order, and splendour of his retinue! in the sumptuous provision of his table, and in the finery of his royal apparel *! How glorious and magnificent his appearance when seated

* 1 Kings iv. 10.

on the throne of his kingdom, arrayed in his robes of state and royal diadem! In all these respects however he is far excelled by the children of Zion's King, by the meanest member of his household. While the most rich and costly attire that ever adorned any of the sons of men, springs, in one form or other, from the earth, and is composed of perishing materials, every real Christian can boast of a robe of heavenly dye and texture, the first, the chief, and most excellent robe, with which those of earthly princes cannot once vie. Theirs may be estimated and bought with money. Though composed of the finest and most costly materials that earth can afford; yet do they gradually decay and wax old. The gloss of the finest garments is soon gone. The richest, the most lively colours soon fade. The fashion passeth away, and ere long themselves wear out. But the robe of a Redeemer's spotless obedience, that fine linen clean and white, which is the wedding garment and the righteousness of saints, as also imparted righteousness or inherent holiness, with the various expressions thereof in the external conduct, washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb, are of infinitely greater value than the wealth of kings and provinces, the one being wrought out by the Son of God in our nature, and the other the effect of the gracious operation of his Spirit on the heart; for what are all the treasures of earth, compared herewith, though so over-rated as in general to gain the preference, but a mere empty toy, a specious water-bubble which in a moment breaks and disappears? The robe of Emmanuel's righteousness shall never wax old or decay, while it imparts, at the same time, a beauty all divine, and secures a happy immortality to those:
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highly-favoured ones who are clothed therewith. Because his people are precious in his sight, in this respect they are honourable: "The King's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold. "She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needle-work; and so shall he greatly desire her beauty. She and her attendant fellow-virgins shall be brought with gladness and rejoicing: they shall enter into the King's palace *."

As the sun beautifies and adorns the objects upon which he shines, and which without his rays would be dark and opaque; so these whom Jesus renews by his grace, and clothes with his righteousness, are made all glorious within and without, both in their nature and state, having, like the Church—the daughter, spouse, and sister of the King of glory, their clothing of wrought gold, and raiment of costly needle-work. In what sublime language does the Prophet speak of their privilege in this particular! "He clothes them with the garments of salvation, covers them with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels †." While Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of the lillies of the field ‡: While his finest robes and richest attire could not boast of such exquisite beauty and delicacy of contexture, or such rich variety of lively and sweetly blended colours as are to be found in a bed of tulips; the poorest in God's family possess a beauty—the beauty of inherent holiness and the ornament of a meek, lowly, and quiet spirit, and are covered with a robe—the robe of Jesus's righte-

* Psal. xlv. † Isa. lxi. 10. ‡ Mat. vi. 29.

ousness, and the garments of salvation, which shall outlive the date of time, and retain all their worth and glory when the wardrobes of the great are perished amidst the flames of a consuming world. Nay more—as a married woman may be said to be clothed with a husband, so the Church, the Lamb's wife, is spoken of, in the book of Revelation, under the figure of a woman clothed with the sun, even the Sun of Righteousness—her crown of glory and diadem of beauty, and having the moon—this sublunary scene of things, under her feet.—May that Lord, in whose hand is the heart of all flesh, effectually counsel and determine us to buy of him this precious raiment, that we may be clothed, and that the shame of our nakedness may never appear.

As in their attire, so likewise in their provision the true Israel dwell alone, and are not numbered among the nations, having food to eat whereof the world knoweth not, and which all its treasures cannot purchase. The most rare and costly provision that ever was served up on the tables of the rich and honourable—the kings and potentates of the world, is but the produce of the earth, “the king himself being “served by the field *,” and the meat which perisheth, and cannot, while enjoyed in the greatest variety and richest abundance, secure health, much less peace of mind, or ward off the assaults of disease and death. With regard to outward things, though God does not promise to feast his people, yet he says, “Verily they shall be fed †;”—“their bread shall be “given them, and their water sure ‡;” and, adds the Apostle, addressing himself to such, “But my

* Eccles. v. 9. † Psal. xxxvii. 3. ‡ Ma. xxxiii. 16.

“God shall supply all your need, according to his
 “riches in glory, by Christ Jesus *;” which includes
 whatever is necessary for the body, “these things of
 “which our heavenly Father knoweth we have need †.”

A much better security this for our enjoying all the
 necessary comforts and accommodations of our journey
 through life than the world can give, or its greatest fa-
 vourites boast; yet, in addition to these, he promises
 to bestow, what is unspeakably preferable. The rich-
 est delicacies of taste, of which the tables of princes
 and sovereigns can boast, may be bought with money;
 but Zion’s provision, wherewith God satisfies her
 poor, could not be purchased but at the expence of
 blood divine. Wherefore, because men can present
 no equivalent, it is bestowed without money and
 without price ‡, on all who, from a sense of need,
 are willing so to enjoy it; while those who are not
 content so to receive it shall be sent empty away §.
 While the greatest on earth may be reduced to such
 straits and exigencies, as not to have it in their power
 to relieve the present necessity of a poor needy sup-
 pliant; rejoice, all ye that fear the Lord, to reflect
 that in your Father’s house there is bread enough, e-
 ven in the worst of times, and to spare, numerous,
 beyond conception as his domestics and dependants
 are! “And as the king of Israel was passing by up-
 “on the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying,
 “Help, my lord, O king. And he said, if the Lord
 “do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out
 “of the barn-floor, or out of the wine-press ||?” How
 soon may the stores of the great be exhausted? If
 Mephibosheth deemed it an honour, of which he

* Phil. iv. 19. † Mat. vi. 32. ‡ Isa. lv. 1. § Luke i. 53.

|| 2 Kings vi. 26. 27.

owned himself unworthy, to sit at King David's table *; what an honour is it to be fed and feasted at the table of the great God, who may with the utmost propriety stile himself, "The King of kings and Lord of lords," and that in the dignified and endearing character of his children! They partake of the hidden manna, the true bread of life which came down from heaven to give life, light, and joy to a perishing world, and which the Son of man will give. They are admitted to drink of the waters of that river, whose living streams make glad the city of God †; and whereof whosoever drinketh shall never die—shall never taste of the second death; for he that eateth of this bread and drinketh of this water shall live for ever ‡. This provision is suited to their renewed nature, and will maintain its life, health, beauty and vigour. Though Lazarus, with respect to his outward man, desired to be fed with the crumbs which fell from Dives' table; yet, even then was his soul fed and feasted on better than angels' food, on heavenly viands, with which the rich man's sumptuous fare was not once worthy to be compared. This the event manifested. So rich, full, and precious that provision which God makes for his people in the everlasting gospel, and its various institutions, that the prophet emphatically stiles it, "A feast of fat things full of marrow, and of wines on the lees well refined §."—"Blessed," said one of old to our Lord, "is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God ||." Blessed is he who is made a partaker of the bread of life in the Church below, and O! the blessedness of all who shall eat bread, and drink the wine new in

* 2 Sam. ix. 8. † Psal. xlv. 4. ‡ John vi. 35. § 58. iv. 14.

§ Isa. xxv. 6. || Luke xiv. 15.

Messiah's kingdom of glory above! "He humbleth himself to behold things on the earth; to raise up the poor out of the dust, and to lift up the needy out of the dung-hill, that he might set them with princes *," with the first-born sons of light, these princes of the celestial court, and with such of the human race, who, as princes, have power with God, and prevail for the blessing. Who, considering these things, would not exclaim, Lord, evermore give us this bread, and let the world unenvied share its richest delicacies †?

I farther observed, That a splendid equipage is supposed to reflect honour upon the owner. How apt are men to glory in the number and splendour of their retinue! And how much are they often admired by others on this account! Are not their retinue and attendants, however, obsequious as they may appear, composed, for the most part, of sycophants and mercenary retainers—of such birds of passage as tarry with them only during their sunshine of prosperity? But, these halcyon days once fled, they betake themselves to more clement regions in quest of new game. Let the men of the world glory in the number and shew of such venal, parasitical attendants, among whom, one capable of steady friendship is rarely found; but let the Christian, in this respect, glory in his God, and in that honourable convoy and safe-guard, which he grants his people in this state of distance and peregrination, till brought home to his immediate and glorious presence.

The despised followers of Jesus, these children of Zion's King, can boast of attendants more honour-

* Psal. cxiii. 6. 7. 8. † John vi. 34.

able than the kings and princes of the earth, beings of a higher order and more exalted nature than man. These are the holy angels, to whose ministry they are more indebted for their outward preservation than they are indeed aware of; yet do they not merit, and as little do they claim divine honours on this account. When Jacob fled from his father's house, to escape the effects of his enraged brother's resentment, without retinue or attendant, God discovers to him in vision that he was not alone, that his Father in heaven was with him, and gave his angels charge over him: "And when the sun was set, he lay down," says the sacred historian, "in a certain place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold, a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham, thy father, and the God of Isaac *," &c. While the vision of the ladder, with the angels ascending and descending upon it, and God himself at the top of it, might be intended to prefigure Messiah's future advent in the flesh, as the grand medium of all divine communications between heaven and earth, through whom God and angels are reconciled to guilty men; it was also certainly designed to assure the Patriarch of God's presence and protection with him whither he was going, and how ready his angels were to do him the kindest and most important offices. This is plainly expressed in the passage; and Jacob's remark upon the whole, when he awoke, was, "Surely the Lord is in this place †. How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this

* Gen. xxviii. 11. 12. 13. † Verse 17.

“is the gate of heaven.” At an after period, when returning home to his native place, enriched with the marks of the Divine presence and favour, we are told, as expressive of the same superintending care of Heaven, that, as “he went on his way, the angels of God met him. And, when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God’s host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim*.” How remarkable to the same purpose what we find recorded with respect to the prophet Elisha, on a certain occasion! The king of Syria, in order to avenge himself on the prophet for apprising his enemy, the king of Israel, of his secret counsels and measures, sent horses and chariots, and a great host, to Dothan, where the prophet then was; “and they came by night and compassed the city about. And when the servant of the man of God was risen early and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city, both with horses and chariots: and his servant said unto him, Alas, my master, how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not; for they that be with us, are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw: and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha†.” What a poor, contemptible figure does the king of Syria make, amidst his guards and principal officers, compared to the Lord’s prophet at Dothan, encompassed by such a glorious host! That this dignifying privilege is not confined to a few peculiar favourites of heaven, is evident; for the royal Psalmist speaks of it, as com-

* Gen. xxxii. 1. 2. † 2 Kings vi. 14. 15. 16. 17.

mon to all that fear God: "The angel of the Lord
 "encampeth round about them that fear him, and
 "delivereth them*." These celestial guards are invi-
 sible to eyes of flesh, and therefore disregarded by
 those who as yet can see with no other; but the
 real believer may by faith behold himself so guarded
 and attended in every situation. If the gospel dis-
 pensation enlarge the privileges of Christians in every
 other respect, can we suppose them abridged thereby
 in this particular? The real members of the Church
 of Christ, under the New Testament, are said, in their
 accession thereto, to have come to an innumerable
 company of angels†. Poor and despised as the disci-
 ples of Jesus may have in general been in every age;
 yet do the angels of heaven cheerfully attend them,
 and constitute their constant guard; for, says the
 Apostle, are they not all, Gabriel himself not excepted,
 ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them,
 who shall be heirs of salvation‡? In the case of Dives
 and Lazarus, already referred to, what a striking
 contrast do we find! and how much fitted to display
 the superiour advantages of the godly, even in the
 worst assignable condition! The rich man was cloth-
 ed with purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously
 every day; while, no doubt, a train of menial at-
 tendants were obsequious to his call. The poor man,
 so far from sharing even the common comforts and
 accommodations of life, was laid at his gates full of
 sores, so exposed, that the dogs came and licked them,
 and so destitute, that he desired to be fed with the
 crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Both
 died; for that event is appointed for all§—for the

* Psal. xxxiv. 7. † Heb. xii 22. ‡ Heb. i. 14.

great, rich, and honourable, as well as for the poor, needy, and despised; for the king upon the throne no less than for the beggar on the dunghill; for the wicked as well as for the righteous,—a distinction still more important. The sacred text particularly remarks, that the rich man was buried, while no mention is made of the sepulchre of the other. According to the custom of those days, Dives would no doubt be embalmed, and having lain some time in state, be then interred with great funeral pomp and solemnity, while a train of mourners attended his remains to the house appointed for all living. Tracing things only thus far, one would be ready to exclaim, Let me live the life, and die the death of the rich man, and let my latter end be like his! But mark well the end of both, in which the dictates of sacred wisdom are verified: “The wicked is driven away in his wickedness; but the righteous hath hope in his death *;”—“for the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect thereof quietness and assurance for ever †.” Thus runs the sacred narrative: “There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom;” that is, his soul was conveyed, immediately upon its separation from the body, into the abodes of the blessed. “The rich man also died, and was buried: and in hell

* Prov. 14. 32. † Isa. xxxii. 17.

* he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom *." Now, judge ye whether of the two had the greatest honour shewed him at death; Dives, whose remains were attended to the tomb by a numerous train of feigned mourners, while his soul, the only conscious part, is thrust out of the body by the king of terrors, and driven away by infernal fiends from all his earthly glory to the dark abyss of woe, the prey of misery, horror, and despair, which admit of no intermission, or end; or poor Lazarus, whose body, perhaps, had scarce the burial of an ass; yet was, in his immortal part, escorted by angels to the regions of the blessed,—the mansions of glory, honour, and immortality. Allowing all this to be but a parable, in which our Lord had no particular person in his eye, yet is it a parable founded on the most solemn reality, and often awfully verified in the course of divine providence; for, verily, it shall be well with the righteous, but ill with the wicked†, when the passing scene of human life is over. What advantage can the one now reap from all his former wealth and glory? the recollection of which must enhance his present misery; while the momentary afflictions of the other are forgotten, or only remembered with joy and gratitude, as paving the way for such exalted glory and felicity, and giving them a higher relish in fruition.

If such perishing things as costly food and raiment, and such mercenary beings as in general compose the retinue of the great are, however, allowed to confer honour and respectability on their present owners, will not a moment's reflexion suffice to convince us, admitting the testimony of scripture on the head,

* Luke xvi. 19, 20, 21, 22, 23. † Isa. iii. 10, 11.

that such honour have all the saints, even in their present state of minority, and that in a much more eminent degree, whence it is easy to infer the extent and magnitude of their future prospects.

But if we speak of the attendants of the saints, we may justly say, a greater than angels is here. All the perfections of Deity are as a wall of fire round about them, and a shade at their right hand—their sun and shield, and an impregnable tower to which they may flee on every emergency and danger, and find absolute safety, be hid, as in a pavilion, in the most evil and perilous days. These are the men of their counsel, their life-guard and retinue; and, O! how safe and honourable to be so attended! They are honoured with the intimate and gracious presence of all the persons of God-head. In the most destitute and forlorn situation, as to human view, they may say, with their Lord on a certain occasion, We are not alone, because the Father is with us*. Being the habitation, the consecrate temples of the living God, through his Spirit that dwelleth in them, these will he never desert, or abandon to their former possessor: “Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell
“with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit,
“to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive
“the heart of the contrite ones†.” Agreeable to this, saith the Lord Redeemer, “If a man love me,
“he will keep my words; and my Father will love
“him, and we will come unto him, and make our
“abode with him‡.”—“If any man,” says he elsewhere, “hear my voice, and open the door, I will

* John xvi. 32. † Isa. lvii. 15. ‡ John xiv. 23

“come in to him, and will sup with him, and he
 “with me*.” Few are favoured with such marks
 of royal condescension from earthly majesty; and,
 indeed, there are but few who could support them;
 but this honour and happiness have all the loyal sub-
 jects of Zion’s King, though infinitely higher than
 the kings of the earth; for they are honoured with
 his frequent visits, and often feasted with him at his
 own expence. Let the men of the world then,
 “talk no more so exceeding proudly †,” in extol-
 ling its momentary honours, while they pour con-
 tempt on the ways and people of God. Let not
 such arrogance come out of their mouth; “for their
 “rock is not as our Rock, even themselves being
 “judges ‡.” If they will look at the things which
 are seen, and are temporal, and be chiefly swayed by
 them, notwithstanding every proof of their vanity
 and unsatisfying nature, and every admonition they
 receive to an opposite conduct, they alone must bear
 the consequences; but let the followers of Jesus shew
 themselves possessed of the wisdom from above, by
 looking at these things which are unseen and eternal,
 firmly persuaded of their reality and importance, and
 endeavouring, through Divine aid, to maintain a cor-
 responding practice. Are any of us enabled, in our
 fixed judgment and choice, and when Providence
 calls to it, “To choose,” with Moses, “rather to
 “suffer affliction with the people of God, than enjoy
 “the pleasures of sin and sense, which are but for a
 “very short season;” esteeming the reproach of
 Christ greater riches than the treasures of earth? Let
 us ascribe the glory of such victory over the world

* Rev. iii. 20. † 1 Sam. ii. 3. ‡ Deut. xxxii. 31.

and corrupt self solely to him, and be ever ready to own that he alone hath made us to differ, and that we neither have nor can do any thing truly good, but as he is pleased to bestow, and to enable us: "The natural man," or *the animal man*, as the word imports, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned *;" and such were the best of us once; and that we are not so still is entirely owing to the powerful interposition of free, sovereign grace. While we are allowed to reap the benefit, let God have all the praise and glory. Once more,

IV. Titles of distinction, and offices of importance to the peace and happiness of society, are generally allowed to derive honour to those who possess and sustain them. Were it not so, why should many be so ambitious and careful to obtain and secure these for themselves and their friends, and so much disposed to place a high value on them when obtained? Such, acting in character, are indeed justly entitled to all due respect. Often, however, have there been men found, bearing the most pompous titles, and invested with the most important offices, whose conduct, mean-while, in private life, or gross abuse and perversion of the trust lodged in them, mark them out, in proportion to the eminence of the sphere they occupy, as objects of public odium, from which no adventitious circumstance whatever can screen. But allowing them to possess genuine worth and respectability of character, and to acquit themselves with the

* 1 Cor. ii. 14,

utmost propriety in their public stations, what are the civil advantages they derive to mankind, compared to those which flow from the prayers of the godly?—their pious example and counsels altogether out of the question. In regard of the latter, they are indeed called *the light of the world*, and *the salt of the earth*; the mean of illuminating a benighted world, and preserving it from the worst kind of putrefaction—the corruption and turpitude of sin. Against this it is no objection, that the wicked hate this light, as birds of night do the rising sun, and refuse the benefit of this salt, lest it should cause their flesh to smart, and gall their putrefying wounds. Let such account the people of God the refuse of mankind, and “the men who turn the world upside down*”; yet, from Abraham’s intercession for the cities of the plain, and God’s gracious concessions in answer to his requests†; and from Moses’ interposition in behalf of ancient Israel, when the wrath of Heaven was ready to be poured forth upon them‡; as also from the deliverance granted to Paul’s fellow-voyagers to Rome§ for his sake, we may easily learn how much others, even the very worst of men, may be often indebted to the prayers of the saints for the exercise of divine forbearance, and the warding off merited, impending judgments||. Deplorable, indeed, and past all hope, is the condition of that nation and of these individuals, in whose favour God refuses to hear his servants¶; for then does their destruction become inevitable**. By this do they confer no obligation, deserve no esteem? no returns but reproaches and persecution? It was a cutting question our Lord put to the

* Acts xvii. 6. † Gen. xviii. 23—33. ‡ Exod. xxxii. 7—15. § Acts xxvii. 23. 24. ¶ Jer. xv. 1. ¶ Ezek. xiv. 14. ** 1 Sam. xv. 11. 35. and xvi. 1.

Jews: "Many good works have I shewed you from
 "my Father; for which of those works do ye stone
 "me *?"—"When the Lord cometh with ten thou-
 "sands of his saints, or holy ones, to execute judg-
 "ment upon all, and to convince all that are ungod-
 "ly among them, of all their hard speeches, which
 "they have impiously spoken against him †," in his
 body mystical; will it not prove confounding to be
 addressed in behalf of those who here imbibe his
 Spirit, and copy after his example, 'Many a good
 'wish have they formed, and earnest request have
 'they presented to God for your temporal and eter-
 'nal felicity; and that even at the very time they
 'received the most ungrateful returns of contempt
 'and hatred, contumely and slander?' This for-
 giving and benevolent temper is truly heroic; for
 better is he who, in this respect, ruleth his own spi-
 rit, than he who taketh a city § or routs an army.
 It is derived from him, who spent his expiring breath
 in praying for his very murderers, "Father, forgive
 "them; for they know not what they do §," and im-
 ports no mean degree of conformity to him. How
 eminently is this temper displayed, and how amiably
 exemplified in the conduct of the first Christian mar-
 tyr, Stephen, in his expiring moments, when his va-
 luable life fell a sacrifice to inhuman violence! "And
 "they stoned Stephen," says the sacred historian,
 "calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive
 "my spirit," (the highest act of trust and worship,
 and that in the most solemn and critical hour, which
 plainly bespeaks his faith in Christ's supreme Deity).
 "And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice,

* John x. 32. † Jude 14. 15. ‡ Prov. xvi. 32.
 § Luke xxiii. 34.

“ Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when “ he had said this, he fell asleep*.” How honourable an exit from this vale of tears, to the happy regions of love, glory, and bliss above!

With regard to the Titles given the people of God in scripture, which import their being dignified persons, and honourable in his sight, at present I can specify but few of the many which there occur. In the Forty-fifth psalm, which most commentators expound as referring to Christ and his Church, and expressive of that mutual love which results from the endearing and indissoluble union and relation that subsist between them (the only consistent exposition indeed which can be given of it), they are designed, “ THY honourable women;” that is, Messiah, he being the person addressed immediately before. Their relation to him and the participation of his grace constitute them such. Among these, Kings daughters are said to be; for though not many†, yet some mighty and noble are chosen of God, and called. This title, however, applies to all true believers, who are promoted to great honour and spiritual dignity by virtue of their being born of God and espoused to the Lord Jesus, the King of glory, in an everlasting and well-ordered covenant, which shall never be forgotten or disannulled. This relation, while it imports the most distinguished honour, also bespeaks a mutual endeared affection. For the same reasons, and to carry our ideas of these still higher, they are designed, in their collective capacity, the Queen, and represented as standing at his right hand in gold of Ophir; that is, in robes wrought with the most precious gold. This appellation implies not only the near-

* Acts vii. 59. 60. † 1 Cor. i. 26.

est relation and most endeared affection, but also the most dignified character. It imports great honour and happiness; which are also farther intended by her station and attire, at the right hand, in gold of Ophir. The fine gold is emblematical of the beauty, the durability, and perfection of Emmanuel's righteousness, with which she is clothed as with a robe; as also of the inherent graces of the Spirit, by which she becomes glorious within. Here the Church and all her believing members are spoken of as the Daughter, and the Queen or Spouse of Zion's King; and elsewhere, as his Sister, relations inconsistent with each other in the same person in civil life; yet they all perfectly accord as applied here. This assemblage of endearing and dignifying titles plainly intimates, that the relation which subsists between Christ and his people involves in it every kind of honour and affection, which these and the like import among men. With what propriety may he then address them, "Hearken, O Daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house: So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him *!"

There are other two titles, to mention no more, which claim our particular regard, that of Kings and Priests. "Unto him that loved us," says John in the name of all real Christians, "and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, even his Father †." Among the Jews these offices were distinct and separate, and that by divine appointment, both never meeting in the same person. The former was God's representative

* Ver. 10. 11. † Rev. i. 5. 6.

or vicegerent, as the supreme magistrate, or head of the body politic; and the latter the visible head of the body ecclesiastic, in which he was a lively type of Messiah, the great high Priest of our profession. The person of both was deemed sacred, as the Lord's anointed. So highly was the character of Pontiff valued in the Heathen world, that we find kings and emperors assuming the title of high priest and often officiating as such in their religious rites and ceremonies. When the Spirit of God, then, gives real Christians the designations of Kings and Priests to their God, does he not evidently mean hereby to convey the idea of honour and sanctity, and to represent them as doubly sacred? Men may indeed give and receive pompous titles, to which nothing substantial or really beneficial is annexed; but it cannot be so with God; for the titles he bestows on his people import an honour and happiness corresponding to them. Are they termed *Kings*? we are assured "It is their Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom *;" for this he hath promised to all that love him, and theirs it is by the most indefeasible right. While the kingdoms of this world, though often the occasion of much contention and bloodshed, are but of short duration and very limited extent; this is everlasting and unbounded as his own dominion. In having God for their portion, they inherit all things †, and because he lives, they shall live also ‡. Are they called *Priests*? it is to their God and Father, to officiate in his heavenly temple, and dwell for ever in his glorious presence. Do they thus bear such official characters, as import the most honourable distinction? and are these of God's or-

* Luke. xii. 32. † Rev. xxi. 7. ‡ John xiv. 19.

daining and bestowing, who is the alone and absolute fountain of all power and honour? can it then be any presumption, nay, is it not exceeding rational to infer, that this reflects the most genuine honour upon them? In all this, however, "God hath chosen," as the Apostle, writing to the Corinthians, tells us, "the foolish and the weak things of the world, to confound the wise, and the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things that are despised, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence."

Thus have I considered some of these things which are commonly allowed to impart honour among men; such as—high birth and honourable connexions;—vast wealth, extensive property, and future prospects;—rich apparel, splendid retinue and costly provision;—important offices and dignifying titles; and shewn, it is hoped, to the conviction of every candid mind, that, in all these respects, we may say, with the inspired writer in the text, *Unto you therefore who believe there is honour*,—honour worthy of the most unbounded ambition. Nay, must we not in all these particulars yield them the pre-eminence? the sacred oracles being judge, and their verdict admitted on this head; and such as will not now believe their report, nor submit to their authority, God will take his own time and way to convince of their guilt and folly, and that his judgment is according to truth, and his decisions all founded in justice and equity—The improvement of the whole shall be reserved as the subject of a separate discourse. May the Lord himself bless what hath been now suggested agreeable to his word. *Amen.*

DISCOURSE VIII.

THE

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER AN HONOURABLE ONE.

I PETER ii. 7.

Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: or, as in the original, Unto you who believe there is HONOUR.

ONCE a mighty Potentate put this question to his favourite prime Minister, "What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour?" The haughty ambitious minion thinking in his heart, "To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?" answers his sovereign, "For the man whom the king delighteth to honour, let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head: and let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour*." These

* Esth. vi. 6. 7. 8. 9.

marks of honour were dictated by the most unbounded and insatiable ambition; and, perhaps, the greater part of those who are deemed honourable in every age, would herein cordially join issue with him; for such is the honour which the world courts and admires; yet can it not admit a moment's comparison with *that* to which Peter alludes in the text.

But, should it be asked, What shall be done to the man whom the King of kings delighteth to honour? we can answer, with an Apostle, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for him *;" which he hath already partly bestowed upon him, and to the full and perpetual fruition of which he will in a little promote him.

Though it is but very little of this we can here trace and know; for the most enlightened Christian on earth sees but darkly, and as through a glass; yet is it hoped that something of it may be learned from what hath been advanced in the illustration of the subject. There the present privilege and future prospects of real Christians have been contrasted, in a few particulars, with some of these things which are generally allowed to confer honour among men;—whence we may address all of that description, with our Apostle, *Unto you who believe there is honour.*

Having discussed what was proposed on the doctrinal part, I now come to subjoin some *reflections* from the subject, and *application* of it, which, may the Spirit of all grace effectually apply to each of our hearts.—Considering with what difficulty men are brought to credit the heart-animating truth in the text,

* 1 Cor. ii. 9.

That there is honour to them who believe, permit me, Brethren, to enlarge here a little, although I have already much exceeded the bounds at first intended.

I. It is then obvious here to infer, The real dignity of the Christian, and the superiour excellence of the Christian character, whatever the men of the world may think of either. That the genuine believer in the Son of God is an honourable and dignified character, will appear from what hath been suggested in the progress of the subject. While but very few of our race can claim kindred to kings and nobles, to the great and honourable of the earth; all these who are born again—born from above, have the supreme Lord of all for their Father, and are enabled by the Spirit of adoption to draw near unto him, and confide in him as such: “They are born,” say the oracles of sacred wisdom, “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God *;” and become his sons through faith in Christ Jesus. They are allied to angels, yea to the Lord of angels; “for they are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones †,” and therefore “he is not ashamed to call them brethren ‡.” Are some deemed honourable for their wealth and property? Let such claim precedence for the possessions, and grasp at the honours of earth; but yours, O Christian, is the kingdom of heaven, and durable riches and honours there! You have food to eat whereof the world knoweth not, and of which its votaries cannot taste. You are clad with robes, with which those of Solomon in all his glory could

* John i. 13. † Eph. v. 30. ‡ Heb. ii. 11.

not compare,—the robes of Emmanuel's righteousness, and the ornament of a meek and sanctified spirit.—What are the attendants of the great compared to yours? They may boast of mercenary menials, obsequious to their call; but you can boast of attendants far more glorious and mighty than the kings of the earth, to one of whom, armed with the divine commission, all their forces are not a match *! “Are they not all,” says the Apostle, speaking of the angels of heaven, “ministring spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”—Are they designed Kings and Priests? This honour is not of man's making or bestowing; but cometh from God, to whom they shall be such for ever. The honours, privileges, and treasures they possess correspond to these sacred and dignified titles; and death, which levels earthly honours with the dust, shall only introduce to the complete and perpetual possession of theirs.

As the real Christian is promoted to great honour and dignity, so his character is truly excellent. It comprises “whatsoever things are true, honourable, just, pure, lovely, and of good report†.” In its perfection it includes perfect conformity to God in the moral excellencies of his nature, and even here this conformity is begun, and gradually advancing towards its completion. Though these things are despised by such poor sinful mortals as have their eyes blinded by Satan, the god of this world, yet they cannot appear small and uninteresting to those who receive the word of God as the rule of their faith and practice, and the basis of their present hopes, and

* 2 Kings xix. 35. † Phil. iv. 8.

measure of their future prospects; for such will count them all their salvation and all their desire.

II. From this subject we may farther infer, The obligations real Christians are under to cultivate gratitude and humility. Can they reflect upon what they have been, and still too much are, and not be humble under a sense of their extreme unworthiness, even of the least of God's favours, much more so of such distinguishing honour? Can they call to mind to whom they are indebted for this privilege? who it is that hath made them to differ from what they themselves once were, and many of their fellow-men, the same by nature, still are, and not feel the most lively emotions of gratitude to their redeeming God and Saviour? Is Jesus the author and finisher of that faith by which himself becomes precious to the believing soul? Is salvation of him in every sense?—in its contrivance, purchase, power, application, and final consummation in heaven? Is he the Alpha and Omega—the author, medium, and sum of salvation; and will they not be ready to adopt the animated and grateful ascription of the beloved Apostle, “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, even his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever *!” To them that believe Christ is an honour, to which no earthly honour can compare. He is their all in all, at all times and in every situation; their light in darkness; their strength in weakness; their health in sickness; their wealth in poverty; their honour and steady

* Rev. i. 5. 6.

friend under the world's reproaches and contempt; their joy, and the subject of their song in sorrow, and during the darkest night of adversity; their shield, buckler, and safe-guard in the day of battle and war, of pestilence and great destruction; their hidden manna and life-giving bread amidst famine and dearth, whereof the world knoweth not, nor can receive; their life in death, and their everlasting light, bliss, and portion beyond it. Who, interested in him, can survey and believe all this, and not exclaim, with an Apostle, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us *," that we should be called and constituted the sons of God, endowed with their dispositions, animated with their hopes, and in due time exalted to possess their glorious prospects!

As the consideration of these and the like things, should excite and command our gratitude and praise, and will, when grace is in exercise; so should it also promote our humility, our lowliness of heart and deportment. While pride is the harbinger of destruction, and a haughty spirit portends a fall †; before the honour intended in the text is humility ‡, which, when genuine, is a certain evidence of an interest in it. While a proud and haughty spirit is the darkest and deepest feature of Satan's image, the most distinguishing characteristic of a child of hell; humility, when founded on and regulated by gospel principles, motives, and ends, is the fairest lineament of the new creature, the brightest ornament of the Christian character, an evidence of a title to heaven, and a special meetness for it. While God resists the proud and knows them afar off, with the humble and poor in

* 1 John iii. 1. † Prov. xvi. 18, ‡ Prov. xviii. 12.

spirit will he dwell, and on them will he bestow grace and glory, these true riches and honour. These, unlike the wealth and honours of the world, instead of elating the mind with high ideas of our own imaginary importance, inspire and ascertain lowliness of heart and deportment. Is it God's great and ultimate end in our redemption, the praise of the glory of his own grace? in this end will his people cordially acquiesce. That the loftiness, high looks, and proud pretences of men—of their own hearts, so far as unrenewed by grace, may be brought down and abased, and the Lord alone exalted, is their hearty wish and ardent prayer, that so he who glorieth may glory in the Lord. As the praise of all is wholly due to him, and claimed by him, so to this claim, in its fullest extent, they give their hearty approbation; saying, with one heart and voice, of him whose name alone is excellent and worthy to be praised, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake*." All this they are sacredly bound to do, and they feel, at times at least, the force of the obligation. If we know nothing of this experimentally, it is clear to a demonstration, that we are yet strangers to the faith which appropriates Christ as precious, and destitute of that honour, and these privileges which stand inseparably connected with it.

III. From this subject we may likewise infer, How much real Christians are bound to study in all things a corresponding behaviour. Does God now promote all of that description to great honour and dignity,

* Psalm cxv. 1.

and present to their faith the certain prospect of glory, honour, and immortality, beyond the few passing days of life; then should the consideration of what they now possess, and are allowed to hope for hereafter, excite to walk worthy of their heavenly extraction and glorious unfailing hopes. Are they the children of a King, of him who is King of kings, by whom the kings of the earth reign, and its princes decree justice? let them then study to be holy, as their heavenly Father is holy *, perfect, as he is perfect †; for so himself commands. Shall they who are born to a crown, and have a heavenly kingdom in certain prospect, fix their hearts on earth, imbibe the maxims, and imitate the customs of the world, which proved so unfriendly to their Lord and Master, and all his genuine followers in every age? Shall they who claim relation to angels and the spirits of just men made perfect in the regions of the blessed, mingle here with the refuse of mankind in their pleasures and pursuits, with the subjects and children of Satan, the god of this world, with whom Messiah, their Prince, is at war, and for whom, if mercy and repentance prevent not, is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever? Shall not these who possess the same renewed nature, are promoted to the same sacred honours, and have the same glorious prospects, with respect to futurity, prize and delight in each other's society, not swayed by such accidental circumstances, as in other respects they may happen to differ? Will such prefer the men of the world, the children of Satan, and enemies of the cross of Christ, if they but happen to be of their own religious party and persua-

* 1 Pet. i. 16. † Matth. v. 48.

sion, to the apparent children of God, who may see it their duty to differ in what they themselves allow does not affect the essentials of Christianity? Can the external ties of Church-fellowship, by which the heterogeneous mass of professing Christians is held together, and which, for the most part, are of man's framing, have more weight with them than the sacred, the indissoluble ties of grace, which knit, cement, and fitly frame together the spiritual system into a holy temple in their common Lord? and will the former prove a more powerful recommendation to their friendship and intimate intercourse than the latter? It may be so with those who have little of Christianity but the name, or whose minds are blinded and warped by prejudices and a party spirit, and whose hearts are strangers to the constraining power of Divine love: but those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and live under the influence of his love, are taught of him to love one another*, however distinguished among men, in point of situation, rank, and external circumstances, or any peculiarity of sentiment in matters confessedly of smaller importance. If we esteem and love him that beget, we will, for that very reason, esteem and love them that are begotten of him†; and if we love not our Christian brother whom we see, how can we love God whom we have not seen‡? He who can despise God's living image in any of his people, or, what amounts to the same thing, who can despise any in whom that image appears, sure can have no great regard for the sacred original. God permits a diversity of circumstances and opinions to take place in society, for the

* 1 Thess. iv. 9. † 1 John v. 1. ‡ 1 John iv. 20.

exercise of mutual forbearance and Christian love, that they who are approved may be made manifest *, and the high pretensions of others discovered to proceed from pride and self-love, passions diametrically opposite to the genius of the gospel. In acting from these principles men may pretend a high regard to the honour and interest of religion, as espoused and professed by their party; but it is evident they herein consult not the honour, nor copy the example of its Divine Author, who is no respecter of persons; but in every age, nation, and description of men, accepts those who fear and love God, and work righteousness, from a heart purified by faith †. That religion, which can subsist without the exercise of brotherly love, in the scripture extent of that grace, must be built on the ruins of genuine Christianity, and exhibits but too melancholy a fruit and evidence of its sad decline. That love which the gospel so often and warmly inculcates, and which it is so admirably fitted to beget and promote in all who properly understand and duly embrace it, can never wax cold, till iniquity, under one form or other, abound, and gain the ascendant in the heart. No wonder those who are born of God should love one another; for the ties of grace, which are common to them all, are more intimate, endearing, and indissoluble than those of nature; for they imply one spirit, temper, and disposition, and shall remain inviolate for ever. To those who live under the influence of the love of Christ, all who bear his image, so far as they have access to know them, will be endeared, notwithstanding any diversity of circumstances or little distinc-

* 1 Cor. xi. 19.

† Acts x. 34.

tions upon which the world is apt to lay so much stress. To act otherwise would be as inconsistent, as much out of character, as for the children of a numerous family to treat each other with coldness, reserve, or disrespect, because they are not all clothed with a garb exactly of the same colour and make, and lodged in the same apartment. Let us beware, my Brethren, of a temper so unbecoming the children of our Father in heaven,—the followers of the benevolent Jesus,—and the professors of that holy religion we have the happiness to enjoy: beware of confirming the prejudices of infidels and unbelievers, and making the ways of God and our own good to be evil spoken of, by our want of charity, benevolence, and brotherly love, with respect to those who may not in all things be of our persuasion. Let all to whom Christ appears precious, and who, of course, are precious in his eyes and honourable, be also precious in ours. Would we wish to approve ourselves genuine believers in the Lord, and partakers of the sacred honours of his people, let us study to love God supremely, and to cultivate holiness of heart and life, with unfeigned love and benevolence towards all men, especially the household of faith. Thus shall we, in some measure, act up to the dignity and obligations of the Christian character,—to the honour and happiness now conferred on us through Christ, and reserved for us in his immediate presence through unbounded ages.

III. The subject we have been considering, also clearly shews how little reason the poorest of God's people have to envy the wicked and ungodly their present honours and perishing possessions, however

much these may bulk in the eyes of carnal, worldly, men, and what great reason they have to be content in every state and condition. Viewing things in the light of the gospel, and weighing them in the balance of the sanctuary, the more elevated their present station, and affluent their present circumstances, the greater objects are they of pity and compassion. They can only boast of honours which spring from man; of a happiness which originates from earth, and terminates there. Though they may now walk in a vain shew, and climb to the very summit of earthly glory; yet of all these adventitious and uninteresting ornaments, will death, in a little, effectually strip them, and leave them, like the silly daw in the fable (which shone gay for a while in borrowed feathers), to appear in their native meanness and poverty, objects of scorn and derision to all intelligent beings. By what strong and expressive images does the royal Psalmist, and pious Asaph, represent the instability of their boasted honours, and fading comforts; and the suddenness and magnitude of that destruction to which they pave the way: "I have seen the wicked
 "in great power, and spreading himself like a green
 "bay-tree; yet he passed away, and lo, he was not:
 "yea, I sought him, but he could not be found."—
 "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou
 "castedst them down into destruction. How are they
 "brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are
 "utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when
 "one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou
 "shalt despise their image*." Who would be content to be degraded for life into a reptile, upon con-

* Psal. xxxvii. 35. 36. lxxiii. 18. 19. 20.

dition of shining in gold and gay apparel, and swaying a sceptre for a day, or even of possessing the prerogatives and privileges of an angel?

Though the present condition of the men of the world, and that of the poor, humble followers of Jesus, when contrasted, may lead many to give the preference to the former, yet the day is fast approaching, when, to all who have had their portion here, the contrast will be awful and striking. To such a degree will it be so, as to force a conviction on every sinner, on every intelligent being, who shall witness the solemn transactions of that day, of the wise and happy choice every believer now makes in preferring, like Moses, affliction and persecution with the people of God, to all the pleasures of sin and sense, which are but for a very short season. Then shall the wicked be constrained to own, with respect even to the poorest and meanest of that description, as an Apocryphal writer makes them, "This was he whom we had sometimes in derision, and a proverb of reproach. We fools counted his life madness, and his end to be without honour. How is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints!" Need I address any present in the solemn, the alarming language of our Lord? "Wo unto you that are rich; for ye have received your consolation. Wo unto you that are full: for ye shall hunger. Wo unto you that laugh now: for ye shall mourn and weep*." To this may I add, "Wo unto you who now glory in the honours, acquisitions, and prospects of a present world; for

* Luke vi. 24. 25.

‘herein, verily, ye have all your honour, happiness, and reward.’

When the rich man in the gospel, who had spent his days on earth, in honour and affluence, forgetful, like most, alas! in the same condition, of the God of his life, and the source of all his enjoyments, and of a state of retribution beyond the grave; when those who resemble him in these respects are torn from the objects they deem most precious, and essential to their happiness, and made to lift up their eyes in torment; must not the remembrance of their former state, the recollection of the good things they once enjoyed, but are now gone for ever, prove a keen aggravation of their present misery? The future condition of all who die under the guilt and power of sin, must, no doubt, be miserable; but that of such, doubly and peculiarly so. They have most to lose, most to account for, and are least prepared for such a dread reverse. How sudden the transition! how dreadful the change! to sink, in a moment, from a state of honour and opulence on earth, with all its ordinary attendants, to a state of utter darkness, horror, and despair, to doleful shades, where peace and rest can find no access, but where their worm dieth not, and their fire shall not be quenched! Though the misery, and the happiness of a future state are described in scripture by sensible images; yet may we rest assured, the description, both of the one and the other, comes exceeding short of the reality. Misery so complicated and intense surpasseth all the efforts of human language to express. Like the enjoyments of the blessed, it is more than eye hath seen, more than ear hath heard; yea, more than can enter into the heart of man to conceive. Add to all this its
unceasing

unceasing duration, that it admits of no intermission, abatement, or end. If so, what shall it profit a man, though he should gain the whole world, and possess in his own person all its boasted honours and greatness, were his own soul to be at length thus for ever lost *? Who would envy the irreligious great what they now possess, who but for a moment reflect, that at a coming day they will be left to sink, amidst the flames and ruins of a consuming world, and the smoke and ashes of their earthly possessions, into the dire abyss of wo and perdition; while they are forced to witness the poor, the humble, and despised, whom God hath chosen, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom he hath promised to them that love him, ascend with their Redeemer to glory, with songs of never-ceasing joy and triumph †! Who would envy the greatest in the world, if destitute of the faith and hope of the gospel, if under the guilt and power of sin, and exposed to the wrath of God? for all the advantage prosperous vice can boast, is but what real virtue flies from and disdains. Where the momentary prosperity of such is emphatically described by the transient verdure of grass, the permanent felicity of the righteous is, with great force and significance, compared to the durable strength and lasting beauty of palms and cedars ‡. The grass, though left to itself, will soon decay and perish. More frequently, however, when it hath attained its most flourishing state, and all the flowers of the field are arrayed in their most perfect beauty, the mower enters with his scyth, and lays the flowery tribes, with all their fading glory, level with the ground. What a powerful admonition

* Mark viii. 36. † Isa. xxxv. 10. ‡ Psal. xcii. 7. 12.

not to trust in princes, nor the son of man, whose breath goeth forth, who returns to his earth, while that very day his thoughts of favour and kindness to his friends perish*,—to trust in him alone with whom is no variableness or shadow of turning! "Man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish. Like sheep, cut off by an infectious distemper, they are laid in the grave, death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning, and their strength and beauty shall consume in the grave, from their dwelling. Be not afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased: For, when he dieth, he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him. Though, while he lived, he blessed his soul: he shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light. Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish†." These are the words of the God of truth. Let all who seek their honour and their portion on earth hear them and tremble. Let none permit themselves to be so far blinded by the god of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, as to trust in the uncertain possessions and short-lived honours of which earth can boast. Though a man should share of these as much as heart could wish; yet can they confer no present happiness, much less will they comfort in the hour of death, or profit the owner in the day of wrath and final decision. These things, notwithstanding every possible care and precaution both in gaining and keeping them, make to themselves wings, though we should not, and fly away, as irrecoverably from

* Psal. cxlvi. 3. 4. † Psal. xlix.

their disappointed owners, as an eagle that takes its flight towards heaven. Let not any then set their hearts, and exhaust all their time, care, and activity, upon that which is not, to the neglect of these durable riches and honours, which God alone can bestow.

These things considered, may not you who are poor in the world, yet enriched by the grace of faith and hope, be content with your present condition, yea glory in it. Man needs but little, nor that little long; and sure your Father in heaven, who hath given his Son to the death for you, and decreed ye should dwell for ever with himself there, will not deny you that. Sanctified poverty is an honourable state; for hereby you possess the nearest conformity to Jesus, who for our sake became poor, and by his voluntary poverty poured contempt upon all human greatness, and reflected a real honour on that state to his people. They who now reproach the poor despise their Maker, who once was so himself, and ordained that state as, upon the whole, the most safe, honourable, and happy for his people. As he was, so were his prophets and apostles in the world, not only destitute of rank, titles, and estates, without silver or gold, but often in hunger and nakedness, and having no certain dwelling-place*. Hath God given you himself, his Son, his Spirit, his grace, and the assured prospect of a crown and kingdom? is it possible you should want any thing truly good for you? That a man's life, that is the happiness of it, consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth†, is an aphorism founded upon unerring authority, and

* Acts iii. 6. 1 Cor. iv. 11. † Luke xii. 15.

confirmed by universal experience and observation. They who have most to lose have most to fear; and the most affluent are as prone to wish for something they possess not, as the poorest; for it is the grace of God alone that can make men content and happy in any possible situation. What others value, the Christian is taught to resign, esteeming it more than enough to suffice all his wishes and desires that God and heaven are his.

How surprising great the dignity, the immunities and prospects of real believers, which may command not merely contentment with their lot, however hard and adverse, but their gratitude and praise! They are the persons whom the King of heaven delights to honour and to bless. Is that man congratulated or envied who stands high in the favour of his prince, and is made to share the fruits of his royal bounty? What is this, however, to your honour and felicity, who can call the King of kings your Friend, your Father, your God, and your portion; yours in the most endearing relations, and by the most indissoluble ties? Though you should be more frequently despised than envied in the world, yet may you with joy congratulate one another, as entitled, by your heavenly extraction or new birth, to privileges and prospects to which the world cannot once pretend, and which it could never yet confer on its greatest votaries. You share honours, joys, and pleasures, of which the world hath no knowledge, and with which a stranger to the life of faith cannot intermeddle. We have the highest authority in ascribing to you, even the poorest among you, titles far more noble and interesting than these pompous and high-sounding ones which excite human ambition, and throw a dazzling lustre round
round

round the name of kings. To none of these doth Jehovah say, Ye are my sons, by virtue of your honourable extraction and high rank among men: but to his humble and despised saints doth he address himself, "I will receive you, and be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Almighty*." You have his promise to enjoy what is good, what his wisdom sees best for you here, and eternal life hereafter. Now are you nearly related to that King, who is the underived source of honour, power, and felicity, and will ere long be owned by him in the most endearing relation, and that before assembled worlds. Let the men of this world, then, if they will, call the great, the proud, and honourable of the earth happy; but how shall they be confounded to see the upright have dominion over them in the morning of the resurrection †!—to see those whom they once despised, as unworthy, to use the language of Job, to be set with the dogs of their flock ‡, shine forth in the kingdom of their Father, like the sun in his meridian strength and beauty! For them that believe, all this and unspeakably more is reserved; for such honour and happiness have all his saints in certain prospect, which may cure them of every tincture of envy, and reconcile them to the most adverse appointments of Divine Providence. To conclude,

IV. While some of you deem your relation to Jesus, and the privileges he has conferred upon you, a real, a lasting honour, and his name, characters, and relations, precious, as savoury ointment poured forth;

* 2 Cor. vi. 18. † Psal. xlix. 14. ‡ Job xxx. 1.

is there not reason to fear, that there are present, who to this hour have no cordial admiring thoughts of him, nor feel the least genuine affection for him? Alas! my Friends, should death overtake you in your present state and frame of mind, I earnestly beseech you to consider what your situation and employment shall be, when the redeemed from the earth will join with angels in celebrating the praises of their redeeming God, and in participating a fulness of joy and bliss in his immediate presence. Your sentence is already pronounced by the august Judge of quick and dead, and except you repent, lay down the weapons of your rebellion, and submit to the sceptre of his grace, before the act of indemnity expires, inflexible justice, enforced by Almighty power, shall infallibly put that sentence in execution. If your sentiments of Messiah, the Prince of the kings of the earth, resemble those which the Scribes and Pharisees, his implacable enemies of old, discovered, when filled with grief and envy at hearing the children in the temple ascribing hosannas to him as the Son of David, tremble at the thought of your present danger and future prospects! Though hand join in hand the wicked and impenitent, his incorrigible enemies, shall not be unpunished; and though their sentence should not be speedily executed, let not their heart be set in them to do evil. “Surely it shall be well
 “with them that fear God, who fear before him;
 “but it shall not be well with the wicked, neither
 “shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow;
 “because he feareth not before God*.” To the kings, princes, and grandees of the earth, who set

* Prov. xi. 21. Eccl. viii. 11. 12. 13.

themselves,

themselves, and take counsel together against the Lord, and against his Messiah, will he one day appear terrible, as well as to the profane and irreligious rabble. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh" at all their unavailing efforts to oppose him: "The Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure *." How will the haughty sons of pride, who think they have a right to demand implicit obedience from their inferiors and dependants, and to punish all contempt of their person and authority with the utmost marks of their displeasure, stand then before the most high God? What dread and horror must seize them when sited before his tribunal who is no respecter of persons, and in whose presence all earthly honours and distinctions are abolished, to account for their contempt of his sovereign authority, and violations of his righteous law! Then shall they find, that Almighty power and sovereign Majesty belong to God, and that he will not sacrifice the claims of truth and justice, holiness and veracity, for the sake of those who now reject the overtures of his mercy, and despise the Author and the means of salvation, though they should be found among the great, the honourable, and the mighty potentates of the earth. He is and will be God, while they who submit not to the sceptre of his grace shall, like a potter's vessel, be dashed to pieces by the iron rod of his justice †. Such may we address, in the words of the Apostle reversed, 'If God be against you, who, or what can be for you.' Will their associates in their sinful courses, and abettors in their

* Psal. ii.

† Psal. ii. 9.

infidel principles, comfort such in a dying hour? Will their wealth, honours, and preferments in the world, profit them in the day of wrath? Will the recollection of these things give them confidence at God's enlightened bar, where they must soon appear to render an impartial account of the deeds done in the body? Beyond expression the very reverse will doubtless be the case!—The haughty monarch of Babylon is brought, by his own experience, to set such an example well worthy of their imitation, and suggest a caveat which merits their regard, and to which they will, one time or other, be forced to subscribe: “Now I praise, and extol, and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase *.” Would such but become timeously wise, and fly for refuge to the hope set before them; because stern justice will soon take place of slighted mercy, and maintain her triumph for ever. Such, with all that trust in uncertain riches, does the Apostle James address, in language at once awful and expressive, “Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire: ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter †.”

* Dan. iv. 37. † James v. 1. 2. 3. 5.

Hear ye the word of the Lord, by his Prophet, all ye despisers of Jesus and his salvation—ye sinners of every class and description, which, if mercy and repentance prevent not, shall ere long be accomplished in your own experience: “Because when I called, ye
 “did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear,
 “but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose that
 “wherein I delighted not. Therefore thus saith the
 “Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall
 “be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye
 “shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice,
 “but ye shall be ashamed: behold, my servants shall
 “sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of
 “heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit. And
 “ye shall leave your name for a curse; for the Lord
 “God shall slay you *.” Here you have contrasted
 the future state and portion of those who love and
 serve God, and of those who love and serve him not;
 and if you believe it not now, nor lay it to heart, the
 day of the Lord, which comes as a thief in the night,
 shall assuredly declare it. That irreversible sentence
 which he will then pronounce, and by which your
 final state shall be unalterably determined, not one of
 the vast assembled throng shall be able to tax with in-
 justice. The heavens will declare his righteousness,
 and the most malignant of his enemies be forced to
 own the equity of his procedure: “As I live, saith
 “the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every
 “tongue shall confess to God *.”

Let me intreat and beseech, in the bowels of
 Christian compassion, all who now hear me, espe-
 cially those who have hitherto sought their honour,

* Isa. lxx. 12. 13. 14. 15. † Rom. xiv. 11.

and their happiness here below, as you regard the authority of the great God, the precious blood and expiring agonies of the ever-blessed Jesus; as you regard your own peace and comfort in time, and your eternal felicity beyond it, to fly speedily for refuge to the hope set before you—to accept of Jesus, as made of God unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; and then to you too, as believing on him who is precious to his people, there will be honour, durable riches and honours; yea, glory, honour, and immortal life. “Acquaint yourselves now with God, and be at peace, and good shall come unto you.” Believe in the Lord Jesus with the heart, and be not ashamed to profess your faith and hope in him. Devote your hearts to his love, and your lives to his service, and let him be, above all things, dear to your souls, and he will dignify you with great honour, and enrich you with the most inestimable blessings.—May the Lord himself herein give you counsel and understanding, and make you rich in faith, and heirs of these honours which shall not decay, and of that kingdom which shall never be moved. *Amen.*

DISCOURSE IX.

FAITHFUL PASTORS THE SALT OF THE EARTH.

PREACHED AT THE ORDINATION OF THE

REV. MR. JAMES BONNAR, AUCHTERMUCHTY.

WITH THE

CHARGE TO THE MINISTER AND PEOPLE.

MATTH. V. 13.

Ye are the salt of the earth.

THAT the Religion of Jesus, in its nature and tendency, is, in all respects, worthy of a Being of infinite perfection as its Divine Author, none will deny, whose eyes are not blinded by the god of this world.—By the works he performs, and the truths he hath spoken, God is and may be known, as well as by the judgments he often executes in the course of his providence, which verily declare that there is a God who ruleth and judgeth in the earth; for all bear evident and indelible signatures of their divine original. As the sun is, and indeed can only be seen by the light himself emits; so truth divine carries its own evidence along with it, and, when viewed by

the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, in whose light alone we can see light, cannot fail of reaching conviction to the heart. When we consider the doctrines, precepts, and examples of Christianity, which are so pure, so heavenly and perfect; the powerful inducements and liberal succours proposed and promised therein, and the glorious prospects it presents to our faith with regard to futurity, to which no other system* of religion that ever appeared in the world so much as pretended; we find ourselves constrained at once to own, that it derives its origin from heaven, and is admirably calculated, through the Divine blessing, to qualify and prepare such as embrace it in truth and reality, for the exalted services, and refined enjoyments of that sublime abode. It must be owing to the depravity of the heart, and its native disaffection to the gospel of Christ, which is strengthened and confirmed by sinful courses, and not to any conscientious scruples about its truth and evidence, or incurable defects of understanding in judging of these, if a candid and serious inquiry into them does not happily terminate in such a conviction. It is well known, that men are always averse to believe, yea, exceeding desirous to disprove whatever must, in present circumstances, militate against themselves; and the influence of this in forming their principles of conduct is natural and

* Here the author would be understood to except the Mosaic institution, under which good men were animated with the hopes of future happiness; yet so obscure were the notices it gave of a future state, compared to the more bright and explicit discoveries of the gospel, that this may be said, with great propriety, to bring life and immortality to light.

common. While such, as have made it their interest that Christianity should be a cunningly devised fable, resist its sacred light, reject its venerable authority, and affect to despise those who profess to believe and regard it, either as weak, silly, enthusiastic creatures, or as so many base hypocrites and dissemblers; let us, instead of being hereby tempted to give up our profession, or to return such railing with railing, have it as our ardent wish and frequent prayer, that God would yet, by his grace, bring such unreasonable men to believe and acknowledge the truth, that this unworthy conduct may not prove their irretrievable ruin.

Does the gospel of Christ, which brings good tidings of great joy to the ears of men, confer the most precious and ennobling privileges on such as in truth believe it, and study, through the aids of divine grace, to walk in all its commandments and ordinances blameless? Does it afford the most firm and stable basis for our hopes, and present the most glorious and extensive prospects? Are the privileges, the securities, and the prospects which a present world can proffer to its votaries, compared to these, transient and unsubstantial as the fleeting shadow? Might it not then be reasonably expected, that they who profess and enjoy a religion so precious in its nature, and interesting in its consequences, would be exemplary for the amiableness of their tempers and dispositions, and the purity of their morals; for the most unfeigned love and piety towards God, and disinterested benevolence towards men? Such indeed will ever prove its invariable effects, when properly understood and duly embraced. When the professors, but more especially the public teachers of our most holy

holy religion, are careful to imbibe its spirit, and exemplify its doctrines in their temper and practice, the most salutary consequences will thence accrue to themselves and others. Hereby they attain peace and joy in believing, as the sure pledge and earnest of future felicity, and become real blessings to society, whose best interests are promoted by their Christian example and pious labours.

But should such, on the contrary, remain strangers to the life and power of godliness; or, by their prevailing temper and practice, openly contradict their sacred profession, will not this natively tend to hinder the progress of the gospel, to confirm its enemies, whether avowed or covert, in their groundless prejudices against it?—tend to expose themselves to deserved contempt from God and man, and to the final and fearful doom of hypocrites and unbelievers? All this is evidently implied in the subject chosen for our instruction on the present important occasion, when taken in connexion with the latter clause of the verse: “Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost his favour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be troden under foot of men.” These words are a part of our Lord’s memorable sermon on the mount, in which he describes the Christian temper and character in a variety of particulars, annexing to each a promise of happiness suited thereto; and recommends and enjoins several duties upon his disciples and followers; and also vindicates the divine law from the false glosses and perverse interpretations of the Jewish doctors, by which, and their own vain traditions, it was made, in a manner, of none effect as to its practical influence on the heart and life. He at
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the same time favours us with an excellent comment upon that unalterable rule of righteousness, in which he explains and enforces its spirituality, obligation, and extent. Though that part of it to which our attention is now confined, may with propriety be applied to all Christians who deserve that name; yet does it more immediately belong to our Lord's Apostles, and to the ministers of the gospel in every age, who are called by their office to be the teachers and guides of others. How justly these first preachers of Christianity merit the character our Lord here gives them, of *the salt of the earth*, appears from the writings of the New Testament, particularly from the book of Acts, where we have a succinct account of their numerous, painful, and assiduous labours, with the many precious fruits that resulted from them, through the concurring influence of Heaven. By their means the word of God had free course and was glorified. Soon was the banner of the victorious cross displayed, and the name of Jesus made known, where the Roman eagle never flew, and where the Roman name was scarce heard of. By the instrumentality of these few illiterate fishermen of Gallilee, the extent of Messiah's kingdom was, in the course of not many years, so enlarged, and the number of his willing subjects so increased, that no earthly monarch could ever boast of subjects so numerous,—of an empire so extensive. Thus, while the prophets that were before them were the salt of the land of Canaan, they became, as in the text, *the salt of the earth*, in a sense indeed peculiar to themselves; for their line went out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world;—became the mean of diffusing the precious, the animating beams of divine truth to the
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most distant and remote nations, and of turning vast numbers among them from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan to the knowledge and service of the One true God. As our Lord's injunction to his Apostles after his resurrection, "Go" and teach all nations," with the promise annexed thereto, "and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," is justly expounded, as likewise, in effect, addressed to all whom he calls to succeed them in that sacred office to the end of time, in which latitude the very mode of expression teaches us to take it: So we are in like manner to consider the figurative language in our text as applicable to all, in every age, who are called by office to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, and significantly expressive of their character when found herein faithful. In this view it is meant to consider it in the farther prosecution of the subject, in which I shall attempt, through Divine aid, to illustrate and explain;

I. THE Character here given to the faithful ministers of Christ; they are, says our text, *the salt of the earth*. And, II. subjoin a few Inferences.

THIS, like most of these used by our Lord, is a metaphor borrowed from an article in common life, the nature and use of which are very well known. It is well chosen, and very fitly adapted to represent and point out what they should be in themselves, and, in virtue of their sacred function, study, through the blessing of God upon their endeavours, to prove to others; and what they will ever be and prove, according to the measure of grace given them, while they act in character, as his faithful ambassadors, the light of the world.

world and the salt of the earth, and as such are owned of him. In this view it is suited to the occasion of our present meeting, and may not, I hope, prove unprofitable.

Salt, you know, is commonly used for the purpose of seasoning such things as are otherwise unfavoury, and to give them an agreeable relish;—and likewise as an antidote against putrefaction, to preserve such things as are apt to corrupt and putrefy. In both these respects faithful pastors may very properly be termed *the salt of the earth*. They are, by their ministerial labours, a mean and instrument in the hand of God to season the hearts and lives of men, who are naturally dead in trespasses and sins, the deformity, corruption, and disease of the soul; and, when thus seasoned, to preserve them from a total and final relapse into the same unhappy condition. The doctrines of the gospel, accompanied by the power of the Spirit, produce effects similar to these of the salt which the prophet cast into the well*, by which its former bitterness was removed, and a sweet refreshing quality imparted. By these the benighted mind is enlightened, and the depraved heart renewed. From that poisoned fountain, thus cured and purified by the grace of God, now flow the salutary streams of faith, love, and holy obedience.

I. It may not, however, be improper here to enquire how the ministers of the gospel come to be seasoned themselves,—whence they are fitted, as the salt of the earth, salt which retains its flavour, for season-

* 2 Kings ii. 21.

ing others; for so they are not by nature, or in virtue of any diligence and application of their own.

1. This, no doubt, implies, That their own hearts are renewed by the grace and Spirit of Jesus Christ. This is essential to their safety and happiness as Christians, if not also to their success as ministers of the gospel. I presume not to say, whether God may not sometimes employ those who are yet unconverted themselves, as the mean of converting others; for herein he is certainly at liberty to act by whom he pleaseth,—once he fed a prophet by means of ravens*; yet this much may we assert from his own word, That them who honour him he will honour, and they that despise him shall be lightly esteemed†; and, like salt that hath lost its flavour, cast out and left to be troden under foot of men. Without the renovation of their own nature, by the grace and Spirit of the Lord Jesus, let their external conduct be ever so decent and uniform, the principles, ends, and motives which actuate them in the ministry, must be materially wrong and defective; and as such disapproved of God, who will at length address them, “Who hath required these things at your hand, “that ye should presume to tread my courts‡? “to officiate at my altar, and take my covenant “in your mouth§?” Whatever talents, natural or acquired, such may possess, if destitute of this seasoning, they are at best but salt that hath lost its flavour, which, even allowing it should be the mean of seasoning others in some sense, yet will itself be cast out at length, as useless, yea noxious, and be troden under foot; for the person who is

* 1 Kings xvii. 4. † 1 Sam. ii. 30. ‡ Isa. i. 12.

§ Psal. l. 16.

not himself a real Christian, will not be owned and treated by Jesus as a faithful minister, either in this world or in that which is to come.

But such, on the contrary, as answer the character of *the salt of the earth*, are vitally united to the Lord Jesus, by a true and living faith, through the effectual operation of the Spirit, and of his fulness receive and grace for grace *. By virtue of this spiritual unction, they mutually dwell in each other, Jesus in them by his grace and Spirit, and they in him by the exercise of faith and love; whence they are enabled to live to the praise of his glorious grace, and the honour of his excellent name. Hereby their souls become his living temples, which he adorns and beautifies with all these various gifts and graces which form the Christian temper, and qualify for the proper discharge of the ministerial office. Hence the life they now live, in their private capacity as Christians, is by the faith of the Son of God †; and it is not so much they that live, as Christ that liveth in them the hope of glory, and the efficient cause of their advancing meetness for it. In virtue of this vital union, and happy change consequent thereon, they come to have the same mind in them which was also in Jesus, and are enabled to learn of him meekness and lowliness of heart, self-denial, and mortification to the world; virtues indispensable in the sacred character, and of the last importance to the faithful discharge of the weighty trust connected with it. Their own hearts are cast in the mould of that gospel which they preach to others, the impression of which they receive as wax from the seal. Their experience of the grace of God upon their own

* John i. 16. † Gal. ii. 20.

souls, in its various operations and tendencies, and of the workings of the old man, the body of sin and death, fits them for speaking a word in season to others,—for directing and comforting the people of God in their different cases and circumstances. As they believe, and in part have felt, so they speak, and others take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus, and experience the power of his grace on their own hearts. Sin, Satan, and the world have lost the dominion there, and in their place a new kingdom is erected, which is not in word—in mere speculative notions or external forms; but in power*, even in the commanding influence of the sublime truths and great principles of religion on their tempers and lives. This kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost†; to seek which, and his righteousness, according to our Lord's admonition‡, is their chief and principal care. As God erects his throne in the heart, so the powers thereof—the understanding, will, and affections, are the proper subjects over which he sways the sceptre of his grace; for till these are devoted to his love and service, we have neither part nor lot in him. In proportion to the power and influence of religion on the heart, will be the health, vigour, and beauty of the soul, and their native expressions in the external conduct. These are the genuine fruits of a true knowledge of Christ, and the lively heart-felt experience of his grace. Hereby they are invigorated and strengthened for the discharge of the duties of the Christian life and ministerial function, united to God, and restored to the possession of themselves; and so acquire a dignity which will command reverence from even the wicked themselves.

* 1 Cor. iv. 20. † Rdm. xiv. 17. ‡ Mat. vi. 33.

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2. But, besides being thus renewed by the grace and Spirit of God, which is indeed the first and most essential qualification in a minister of the gospel, in order to his being faithful and useful, or, in the language of our text, in order to his becoming *the salt of the earth*, he must be likewise seasoned, as salt which retains its flavour, with the knowledge of the precious doctrines of Christianity. I consider this as consequential of the former; for though, in the case of private Christians, a discovery of Christ, and some degree of divine knowledge, must precede a cordial reception of him as exhibited in the gospel; yet that acquaintance with the truths and doctrines of religion, which qualifies for the office of a public teacher thereof, and is indispensably necessary to the proper discharge of it, should ever proceed from, and be grafted upon that faith which works by love and purifies the heart. To pretend to devote ourselves to the work of the ministry before we have yielded the government of the heart to God, or devoted our lives to his honour and service, how absurd and preposterous!

Since the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit have ceased in the church, a competent measure of human literature, or an acquaintance with the learned languages, particularly these in which the scriptures were originally written, and with the different branches of human science, hath, among almost all denominations of Christians, been deemed a necessary qualification in those who are vested with the sacred office, in order to discharge it with honour to themselves and benefit to others.

Though polite literature is far from being the one thing needful in such, yet is it not by any means to

be neglected; nor will it indeed be despised by any but those who know not what it is. When this is pursued with a view to expand the mind, and enlarge our ideas of the works and ways of God, and used as an handmaid to the study and exposition of the scriptures, the most noble ends it can serve, human erudition becomes not merely an ornament in those of the sacred order, but an important qualification, and to others a valuable blessing. This, however, falls not under our present consideration.

Other branches of knowledge have their use, and may be valuable in their own place; but the word of God alone can make wise unto salvation; and, therefore, every faithful pastor must chiefly study to become a scribe well instructed into the kingdom of heaven*, or in the doctrines and constitution of the gospel. Says God, by his Prophet, "The priest's lips should keep knowledge;" namely, the knowledge of the divine law and testimony, as appears from what follows, "and they," to-wit, the people, "should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts†." How can they do this without danger of being misled, unless he is versant in that law himself? and, indeed, this is evidently supposed in their obligation to consult him, and plainly expressed in the foregoing verse, as a leading part of his character—"The law of truth was in his mouth." As the heart, with its various propensions, must be seasoned by the renewing and sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit; so the mind must be likewise, in some good measure, enlightened by his illuminating influence, or his discoveries of Christ to the soul, in his word, person, offices, characters,

* Mat. xiii. 52. † Mal. ii. 7.

and relations. They are, therefore, taught of God themselves*, have an unction from the Holy One†, by which they know every thing necessary to salvation, and are endowed with that wisdom which is from above‡, and is so pure and peaceable in its nature, and so precious and interesting in its effects. To all this add, an aptness and disposition to communicate to others what they themselves know and have been taught, as above. Thus they become, as the scriptures express it, polished shafts in his quiver, scribes well instructed into his kingdom, stewards of the manifold mysteries of God, workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, and pastors according to his own heart, to feed his people with knowledge and found understanding; and able to say, in their public ministrations, with the Apostle, on a certain occasion, "What we have received of the Lord Jesus, that deliver we unto you." This knowledge of God and divine things is to be sought and expected by all who turn their views to the holy ministry, in the diligent study of the sacred scriptures, which are able to make wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus, able to make the man of God perfect; and thoroughly furnished to every good word and work; also by meditation and prayer. And of what is so acquired, through the Divine blessing on these means, it may be said, as of faith, "It purifies the heart, and works by "love" and humility, in opposition to the speculative notions of unrenewed men, which are so apt, through the innate depravity of the heart, to puff up with pride and self-confidence. This divine teaching, however, which even private Christians, but

* John vi. 45. † 1 John ii. 20. ‡ James iii. 17.

more especially the ministers of the gospel, may expect, and should seek after, does by no means supersede the diligent use of the ordinary helps of which they should avail themselves, as some fanatics would pretend; but then it may be affirmed, that all the helps in the world, without the teaching of the Holy Spirit, will not qualify a person for preaching the gospel, with the approbation of God, to the edification of others, and the salvation of his own soul; for without this, even admitting he should preach it in its native purity and simplicity, yet would he himself be cast away at length, as salt that hath lost its flavour and become insipid. Though it is not the province of man but of God to search and try the hearts of others, and their secret springs of action, any farther than these manifest themselves in their outward conduct, yet are church-officers sacredly bound to examine into the knowledge, the piety, and soundness in the faith, of candidates for the ministry, that through favour or partiality, they may lay hands suddenly on no man, as they would not chuse to become partakers of other men's sins, and sharers at length in their plagues.—In all things be it the study of Wisdom's professed children to justify her, and obtain her sanction and approbation.

Being thus seasoned themselves by the grace of God, and the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, through the illumination of the Spirit, two things indispensably necessary as prerequisites for the proper discharge of the sacred office, they are fitted, as the salt of the earth, to become instruments in God's hand for seasoning others. To this great end they are made subservient three ways; namely, by declaring faithfully to others what they themselves have received, — by exemplifying the doctrines they

they teach and inculcate upon others, in their own temper and deportment, life and conversation,—and by accompanying both with their frequent requests and supplications to God, for that blessing which alone can render these effectual for the salvation of those that hear them.

3. Under the solemn character of Ministers of Christ, and with a professed regard to his service and the eternal interests of precious souls, they dare not speak any thing in his name but what they verily believe to be sanctioned by his word. The scriptures of the Old and New Testament being the grand repository, and the complete system of divine truth, to which nothing can be added, and from which nothing can be taken with impunity, to study, preach, and inculcate these, will be the pleasure, the chief care, and business of their lives. Their conscience can bear them witness in the sight of God, that they desire and intend to speak the truth, and nothing but the truth, among those committed to their care; and that it is their earnest and frequent request, to be enabled by Divine grace always so to do. They are not like many, who corrupt the word of God by their false, though ingenious glosses, by which they impose upon the ignorant and unwary, or handle it deceitfully, either suppressing or disguising their own real sentiments, or these truths of scripture which would render them unacceptable to the fashionable, polite, and depraved part of mankind; “but as of sincerity, “but as of God, in the sight of God, speak they in “Christ, teaching and exhorting men to observe all “things whatsoever he hath commanded them.” Well knowing, that every attempt to disguise or soften any doctrine or precept of the gospel, in order

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to accommodate it to the prevailing taste of a corrupt unbelieving world, either to avoid the displeasure or conciliate the favour of their fellow-creatures, would imply the grossest insult to the sacred Majesty of heaven, as well as the basest treachery to the souls of men: their hearts recoil at the very thought of such disingenuous and unfaithful conduct. What they have received from the Lord, through the teaching of the Spirit by the word, that do they wish and endeavour to declare unto others, as he gives them time and opportunity, speaking the truth in love, and approving themselves to every man's conscience, as in the sight of God, by a faithful manifestation thereof, knowingly delivering nothing to which they cannot say, *Thus saith the Lord*. To be directed to speak a word in season to the different and opposite characters to be found among their hearers, warning the wicked of their guilt and danger, and exhorting them to flee from the wrath to come, to the only refuge and effectual remedy provided in the gospel; and suggesting ground of comfort, and a word of counsel and direction to the truly godly, under their various distresses and doubts, will be their deep concern and earnest prayer. Whether they beseech men by the tender mercies of God, or warn them by his terrors, from the warmest emotions of love and tenderness for their precious souls, both alike proceed. While, like their Divine Master, they would not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, they are careful not to daub with untempered mortar, as the Prophet expresses it, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace, and sewing pillows to all arm-holes, thus soothing and flattering men in their vices; or, what will in the issue prove as fatal, in their carnal security.

security and lifeless form of godliness; thus, as becometh the ambassadors of the Prince of Peace, they study to adhere strictly to their commission and instructions, by the faithful delivery of their message, and a sincere, conscientious dealing with the souls committed to their trust, by admonitions, rebukes, and exhortations, as occasion may require, warning, beseeching, and intreating men to be reconciled to God, and persevere in his ways; well knowing that when the great Lord of the vineyard, and Master of the household shall appear, they must render him a strict account of their stewardship. Bearing this in mind, they dare not amuse their people with truths of a merely speculative, uninteresting nature, and still less with subjects of opinion or doubtful disputation, and dry criticism which administer not to the use of edifying; all which might be received without real advantage, or rejected without prejudice to their best interests; but speak the sacred truths of the gospel, which are of the utmost importance to the welfare of immortal souls both in time and eternity. Knowing the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God, that his intemperate zeal without knowledge cannot tend to the honour, or furtherance of the gospel, they are careful, as the servants of the Lord, not to strive, "but to be gentle "unto all men, apt to teach," "speaking the truth "in love," "patient; in meekness instructing those "that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will "give them repentance to the acknowledging of the "truth *." Both their doctrines and practice tend to represent and recommend the religion of Jesus to

* 2 Tim. ii. 24. 25.

the world, as equally remote from the cold, lifeless, mechanical services of the formal moralist and legal professor, in which the heart is little or nothing interested, and the wild, incoherent, unmeaning reveries of the rapturous enthusiast; tend to represent and recommend it as a rational service, and substantial blessing, a heavenly fire kindled in the soul by God himself, and often raised, by the animating breath of his Spirit, into a pure and ardent flame; and a well of water in the heart springing up into everlasting life*.

How much the faithful discharge of this important part of their duty tends, through the blessing of the Most High, to reform the world, and promote the love and practice of universal piety and righteousness, the history of the Church of God in every age can attest; and these parts of the world which are yet destitute of this inestimable privilege afford but too melancholy a proof of it. It is by what the world deems the foolishness of preaching, that God saves them who believe. This is the sword of the Spirit, by which he puts to flight the armies of the aliens, and divests the strong man of his armour and prey; the rod of his strength, by which sinners are made willing in the day of his power; yea, his very power and wisdom to salvation. As this is the consecrate and catholic mean of reclaiming sinners from the error and evil of their way, and building them up in the faith, hope, holiness, and comfort of the gospel to eternal life; so, even such as refuse to be converted and healed thereby, and to whom it will consequently prove the savour of spiritual death unto eternal death, are, notwithstanding, in general so far

* John iv. 14.

wrought upon by it, if they attend upon its stated administration, as to be kept from running into the same excess of riot with others, and to which they might otherwise run. The great truths of the Christian system prove quick, powerful, and penetrating, like salt, pricking and insinuating itself into the hearts and consciences of men, have a purifying, reforming, and preserving efficacy, when understood and embraced in faith and love, and tend to season the heart, and to make the conversation savoury. Hence we read of the savour of the knowledge of Christ, a savour without which all other learning is insipid and ineffectual *. As salt serves to render unsavoury substances grateful and relishing to the palate, and to preserve others from putrefying; so the doctrines of the gospel, declared in their native simplicity and beautiful connexion, are the appointed mean, where thus enjoyed, of making bad men good, and improving such in all Christian graces and virtues, and also of preventing even the worst from becoming still more vile and detestable, by arming conscience against them, and laying restraints upon their irregular appetites and passions, whence those who herein are faithful, may be termed, as in the text, *The salt of the earth*.

4. It was farther observed, That this character may be likewise given to such on account of the holiness and purity of their lives, in which the doctrines and precepts of Christianity are exemplified, or reduced to practice. Personal religion, and a virtuous deportment, is a necessary, an indispensable qualification in all vested with the sacred character.

* 2 Cor. ii. 14.

Though God does not limit the efficacy of his word and ordinances by the character of those who dispense them; yet are we authorised from scripture to say, that wicked irreligious ministers run unsent, and therefore cannot be expected to prosper, but to derive a curse instead of a blessing upon their labours. Can we suppose such will have a concern for the glory of God and the salvation of others, or be at any due pains to promote these, who never yet felt any proper concern, and are at no due pains to secure the salvation of their own souls? The Apostle designs Timothy a man of God, and such he indeed was by profession, as a Christian; but more especially in virtue of his sacred office, as a minister of the gospel *. If this designation is allowed to import the participation of his grace and Spirit, devotedness to his service, zeal for his honour, conformity to his image, and admission into communion and fellowship with him, all which it seems evidently to imply; then, in this respect, ordinary ministers are all sacredly bound to be men of God. Such, however, they cannot be, and yet live without God in the world, imbibing its maxims, imitating its customs, and walking in its ways. Such they cannot be, and yet have their affections earthly, sensual, and diabolical, seeking the things that are their own—their gain, their pleasure, and their honour, each one from his quarter; and not the things which are Christ's—what makes for his glory and the edification of his Church. Such as bear the vessels of the sanctuary must themselves be clean and holy—cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, that they may perfect holiness in the

* 1 Tim. vi. 11.

fear of God. For such as are yet the slaves of Satan, and under the domineering sway of unbridled appetites and passions, the salt of the earth, and the light of the world, are epithets by far too honourable. These whom our Lord so designs, and who are enabled by his grace to maintain a corresponding practice, "are of the circumcision, that worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." They turn their thoughts to, and at length engage in the work of the ministry, not seeking their own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved; and take the oversight of the flock, "not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind*." Animated by the same noble ends and motives which first induced their choice, they are enabled to be vigorous and active, diligent and unwearied in their Divine Master's service, counting nothing too great to do or to suffer for his sake, in as much as they know that their labours and sufferings shall not be in vain in the Lord. They are [not of those who say and do not, who bind heavy burdens for other men's shoulders, while themselves scarce touch them with one of their fingers. So far is this from being the case, that it is their deep concern and frequent request to God, to be enabled by his good Spirit to maintain a consistency of conduct, that their life and doctrine may harmonize, and mutually illustrate each other. They will not attempt to pluck the mote out of their brother's eye before the beam is cast out of their own. They not only point out the way to eternal life by the doctrines they preach, but, as good guides, also conduct their people to and in it,

* 1 Cor. x. 33. 1 Pet. v. 2.

by their exemplary deportment, studying to walk in all God's commandments and ordinances blameless. Thus can they say, in their measure, with the Apostle, "Be ye followers of us, as we are of Christ." They take heed to themselves as well as to their doctrine, that in all things they may shew themselves patterns of good works, and be an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity, that those who hear them illustrating the native influence of the doctrines of the gospel, in promoting holiness of heart and life, and recommending the observance of religious and moral duties from the motives proposed therein, may never find just occasion to retort, "Physician, heal thyself." They are not of those who can appear at times warm and zealous in recommending piety towards God in all its branches; while, notwithstanding, if you follow them to the family and closet, there scarce the very form is to be found. Their closet is an oratory, and their family a little sanctuary, where an altar is erected for the Lord of hosts, whence the incense of prayer and praise daily ascend. In this respect, the resolution of pious Joshua is also theirs, "Whatever others do, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The voice of joy and sacred melody is heard in their dwelling; and the homage of the knee, and tribute of the heart await God in their habitation. What they appear when officiating at the altar, do they study to be, through the aids of Divine grace, when retired from the world, yea, even when no eye but that of the Omniscient is upon them. It is their wish and aim to act and endure in all things as seeing him who is invisible, to set him ever before them, as their witness and judge, and in all their ways

ways to acknowledge him. Religion with them is such a leaven as leavens the whole man, and insinuates itself into their temper and conduct—their thoughts, words, and actions. The gospel of the grace of God teacheth them effectually to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts; and not only so, but also to live soberly, by the practice of all the virtues of temperance and moderation; righteously, by the observance of all the duties of justice and equity in their carriage in civil life; and godly, by an uniform and steady regard to all the offices of piety and devotion which have God for their immediate object. Hereby they are taught, as the Prophet expresses it, “To do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with their God;” endeavouring, by an upright, watchful, circumspect, and pious conduct, to maintain upon their own minds a lively sense of their interest in his love. True religion, as embraced in its life and power, will thus promote in ministers a pious and exemplary deportment. They are taught and disposed of God, to maintain good works, and abound in these fruits of faith and love which are to his glory. With all that humility and self-denial, which are essential to and ornamental of their character, like a city built on a hill they cannot be hid. Does Christ make them burning and shining lights? it is in order to be placed in a conspicuous station, that their light shining before men, and good works seen by them, may induce them to glorify their Father in heaven, and acknowledge that he is with them of a truth. If by their conversation, as well as doctrine, they hold forth the word of life, and practise what they preach; if they possess the graces and virtues they recommend and inculcate upon others;

are affable and courteous, kind and condescending, grave and sober, without verging towards a sullen morosity; and maintain the dignity of their sacred character, without descending to such levities on any occasion, or even innocent freedoms, as are found incompatible therewith; in fine, if they are indeed blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, shining as lights in the world, while the law of truth is in their mouth, and no iniquity found in their lips; may it not be expected that God will own and honour them as his servants; while others are engaged, by their amiable example, to become followers of them, even as they are of Christ? A behaviour corresponding to these graces, which are the fruits of the Spirit, and the effect of his gracious operation on the soul; such as meekness and gentleness, charity and compassion, candour and moderation, patience and forbearance, modesty and humility, catholic love and benevolence, unfeigned piety and devotion, must needs adorn their profession, enforce their instructions, give weight to their reproofs, stop the mouths of calumny and gainfayers, over-awe and command the respect even of the most profligate, and fill the hearts of the pious with sensible joy. While their public instructions and private conduct go thus hand in hand, and lend aid to each other; to the interests of religion and Christian morality, how interesting the consequences! Hereby, the godly are made glad, and encouraged in the good ways of the Lord, the mouths of gainfayers stopped, and the prejudices many are so apt to entertain against the doctrines of free grace and imputed righteousness, as if they slackened the reins of duty, and led to a licentious practice, happily removed; while

while their ministerial labours, through the blessing of God, cannot fail to produce some good effects on all descriptions of men. So much is implied in that expressive character, which God himself gives those in the Jewish priesthood that were faithful in the discharge of their important function: "The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity*." That this may be justly applied to the Christian priesthood is evident; for the essential qualities necessary to both are the same; and when these are possessed, can we suppose the consequences less important and beneficial to themselves and others, than in the former case? While it reflects honour upon themselves to exemplify in private life what they teach in public, to the church of God the happy consequences are many and interesting. It is well known that the life and practice of ministers and professors, have more weight with the enemies of Christianity, either for or against it, than all the arguments they can produce in its defence, for the candid examination of which they have little inclination, and perhaps, in general, as little capacity, through the contracted blindness of their minds with regard to Divine truths. But when these, as they ever should, are founded upon, and regulated by the maxims and precepts of the gospel, such as might otherwise prove deaf to the voice of reason and heavenly wisdom, and blind to all the charms of religion in theory, may yet be won, by the persuasive eloquence of a holy conversation, to the love and practice of whatever is pi-

* Mal. ii. 6.

ous, virtuous, and praise-worthy. The gospel, in the hands of such bright and polished shafts from God's quiver, coming not in word only, but in demonstration of the Spirit and with power, with what amazing energy does it pierce the conscience, ravish the affections, and strike conviction into the most obdurate heart. While Christian teachers, of this happy description, make the light of such a conversation to shine before men, may it not be reasonably expected that others, seeing their works of faith and labours of love, should be led to glorify their heavenly Father on that account; while they themselves are felt and owned to be, in the language of our Lord in the text and context, *The salt of the earth, and the light of the world*. But should this salt, in this respect, lose its flavour, and become insipid or unfavoury, what is it henceforth good for, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men? Though the ministers of religion were to possess the tongues of men and angels, to be able to trace all mysteries, and speak in all languages; yet, if destitute of vital religion and real holiness, what are they but a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal? for all their knowledge and eminent talents only put it in their power to be more extensively hurtful to the best interests of mankind, and render them more like that intelligent but apostate spirit, who rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience, and whose cause and influence they promote. Though such should be eager to grasp at the honours, power, and emoluments, which may be annexed to the sacred office, while they, perhaps, possess very little of the character but the name; yet an unholy, or immoral minister is, in the very nature of things, a contradiction in terms; and what can

can such prove, with all their shewy gifts and boasted attainments, but troublers of Zion, and wounders of religion in the house of its professed friends? From such pests may the good Lord deliver and preserve his Church; for they are but salt which hath lost its savour, in all probability beyond recovery, and therefore only fit to be cast out, not merely as useless, but pernicious, and troden under foot of men. May love to the ever-blessed Jesus, the friend and Saviour of lost men, so overflow the hearts of all his servants, as to make his yoke easy and his burden light, his ways pleasantness and peace, and even sufferings for his sake an occasion of joy in him, and in the hope of his glory.

5. I farther said that the faithful servants of Christ were the salt of the earth by their pious prayers, which avail much.

As vital motion is ever the consequent and evidence of natural life, so is prayer of the divine life in the soul; for it is the breath of the new creature, without which it cannot subsist; the native motion and outgoing of the renewed heart towards God, as its centre of rest, and source of life and action. No doubt, the external observance of this duty may be found where there is no inward vital principle of religion; but it is equally certain, this hath never yet subsisted where that is habitually neglected. As the exercise of prayer is an essential part and expression of the Christian life, so is it also absolutely necessary to the faithful discharge of the pastoral office. For a minister of the gospel to neglect the private duties of piety and devotion, restraining prayer before God in the family and closet, is to contradict his profession, to violate the most solemn engagements, and act
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in direct opposition to the important ends of his sacred function. Be their character and station in the church what may, God will class them with the heathen that know him not, and pour out his fury upon them as the families that call not on his name; yea, turn them at length into hell, with the wicked, the impenitent workers of iniquity. Such are salt that hath lost its savour, and shall therefore be cast out and troden under foot.

The real servants of Christ, however, who have tasted that the Lord is gracious to such as call upon his name in faith, truth, and sincerity, will give themselves to prayer, as well as to the ministry of the word. Persuaded that all their fitness for their work, and success in it, must come from himself, with humble importunity and confidence they implore the Divine assistance and blessing. Like Jacob, they wrestle and make supplication; and, as princes, have power with God, and prevail. All their interest in the court of heaven will they improve for the good of those who are committed to their trust, and for the success of the gospel in general. Their heart's desire and prayer to God, for one and all of them, is, that they may be saved. Will not requests animated by such motives, and directed to such ends, avail much with him who never required any of the seed of Jacob to seek his face in vain? Such fervent importunate supplications open the windows of heaven, and bring down an enriching blessing. Hereby some have been honoured in their day to do much good, whose talents and accomplishments in other respects were far from being considerable. While their eye is directed towards God, as the eye of a servant to the hand of his master, for a suitable and seasonable message to his people, and their humble dependance

dependance on him, so often as called to address them in the exercise of their office, is there not reason to hope, that, according to his promise on which he makes them to rest, he will clothe them with salvation—the doctrine and power thereof, bless the provision of his house, as dispensed by them, and satisfy the poor of his people with the bread of life? While acting in character, will they not be ready to say, in the view of engaging in public services, with Moses, on a certain occasion, “Lord, if thy presence go not with me, carry not up hence;” for their hearts recoil at the very thought of being left alone in such situations! As a regard to the glory of God, and a deep concern for the salvation of their people, will give life and animation to their public instructions, dictate the most moving and pathetic forms of address, and, sometimes at least, inspire with an eloquence divine and almost irresistible; so will this likewise often lead, and effectually constrain to pour out their heart before God, for the concurrence of the powerful influences of his grace and Spirit to attend these, from a conviction that he alone can give the increase, and that without him all human efforts must prove vain and unavailing. Their hearts desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they may be saved; that the flock they are called to feed, and over which they are bound to watch, may be now washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of the living God; and when he, as the great Shepherd, shall appear, be honoured with a place at his right hand, and welcomed by him to his heavenly rest. When thus enabled, in any measure, with Paul, to travail as in birth till Christ is formed in their hearts the hope of glory, may it not be expected, that, through the implored blessing

bleſſing of God on their labours, in answer to their own and their people's prayers, they should, like salt which retains its savour, become the mean of seasoning, or reforming and improving many? Does the energetic fervent prayer of a righteous man, in any station, avail much? and will God shut his ears against the supplications which his own servants present before his throne, in behalf of those over whom he has made them overseers? From these, if not wanting to themselves, they may reap the most precious fruits.

Where such is their pious concern and exercise, is there not reason to believe, that God also often protects from imminent dangers, and grants temporal deliverances in answer to their requests? Of the efficacy of such prayers this way, we have striking examples, in the case of Abraham interceding for the cities of the plain; of Moses, for the children of Israel; of the prophet Elijah, who was thence called *the chariots and the horsemen of Israel*; and of many other pious men. Deplorable indeed, and past all hope is that people or person's condition, in whose behalf God refuses to hear his servants, as appears from Samuel's supplications for king Saul. In this respect the servants and people of God are the pillars of the earth, and the salt of a land, by and on account of which it is preserved from destruction. How often does it fare the better, even with the worst of men, on account of the righteous? for the tares are suffered to grow up among the wheat, lest in exterminating them the wheat should suffer; the wicked among the godly, till the plan of heaven is consummate, and the universal harvest come.

An instance of the remarkable efficacy of prayer in more modern times, permit me to mention, as being

ing to our present purpose. If I remember well, it is recorded in the life of a certain eminently pious and godly Minister*, that, being on a time led out to be more than ordinary earnest in prayer for the protection and preservation of a number of seamen, in the hour of danger, who belonged to the town where he was pastor, and so many of them to his own congregation, who had been pressed on board the royal navy; he afterwards found, that on the very same day they had an engagement with the enemy, in which they gained a signal victory; but in which, however, not a single individual belonging to that place lost his life, though many fell on all sides. How much a people are in this respect indebted to faithful pastors, will never be fully known till the chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls comes to acknowledge their most private works of faith and labours of love before an assembled world: and, indeed, this most essential expression of Christian friendship and pastoral affection, because hid from the eyes of men, is by most overlooked or disregarded. Where little or nothing of this is to be found, where all their prayers, and seeming concern for the best interests of their people are confined to the pulpit, and their visitations from house to house, very little good can be reasonably expected from their ministry, let their talents be what they will; or, at least, they themselves will be found awfully deficient in the sight of God. Would they herein act in character, as the salt of the earth, and approve themselves faithful to the souls committed to their pastoral care and inspection, they must, like the Jewish High Priest of old on the great

* Mr Flavell.

day of atonement, carry their people on their heart, in all their approaches to the Lord, at the throne of his grace. Would to God that all invested with the sacred office possessed such a heart, and gave such proofs of their Christian benevolence; and that all intrusted to their care strove together with them in their prayers! What happy consequences would thence accrue to both! Thus, as salt which retains its flavour is used to render food, otherwise unfavoury, grateful and agreeable to the taste, the real servants of God become a mean in his hand, by the faithful exhibition of the truth as in Jesus—by the exemplary purity and holiness of their deportment—and by their fervent prayers, of seasoning the hearts and lives of men with the flavour of true piety and Christian morals.

II. But I also observed, that there is another sense in which the allusion holds, which is, That as salt is used as a preventive, or antidote against putrefaction; so God makes use of faithful ministers as a mean to preserve his people from pernicious principles, and corrupt practices. Errors in doctrine are not such harmless things as some would represent them; for it is a well known fact, that corruption in practice is the native and almost necessary consequence of defection in principle. Under the Mosaic institution, no leprosy was deemed more dangerous and incurable than that in the head. It is certain, opposite doctrines cannot be true, nor revealed by the God of truth, whose works and ways all harmonize. To suppose it a matter of small moment, whether our views of the great truths of Christianity be agreeable to the mind of the Spirit, who inspired the sacred penmen,

penmen, or not, would be to offer him the grossest insult, as if he were indifferent whether we believed what he spoke, or affixed thereto a quite different sense from what he intended, and as if his revealing such doctrines, rather than others, as leading to and influencing a certain line of conduct, was not the result of infinite wisdom; for they in their wisdom can assure us, that other, yea, the very opposite doctrines, are equally productive of the same effects. In the sacred writings, however, whose dictates are infallible, and wisely adapted to promote holiness of heart and life, much more stress is laid upon orthodoxy, or soundness in the faith, than many seem willing to allow, who, in this respect, would treat the scriptures as a nose of wax, which every one may so mould and fashion as may best comport with his own preconceived opinions. The great Apostle of the Gentiles, who finished his education, begun at the feet of Gamaliel, in the third heavens, not only instructs his son Timothy what to preach, but also commands him to charge some, that they teach no other doctrine; to withdraw himself from those who do, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; to avoid these oppositions of science, falsely so called, which some professing have erred concerning the faith; and to hold fast the form of sound words which he had heard of him. Titus is likewise informed, that a bishop, or overseer in the church, must hold fast the faithful word as he has been taught, and solemnly charged to speak the things which become sound doctrine; in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that

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cannot be condemned *. Shall any say, that this, though necessary in the apostolic age, now continues to be no longer so? or that a person, who is erroneous, or unsound in the faith, may yet possess these qualifications, and comply with these injunctions?

As these who vent errors are very guilty in the sight of God, and pernicious to men, as salt which hath lost its savour; so those who own and countenance them are far from being innocent. Both are guilty of contemning and violating the most positive precepts, as appears from the above, and from Solomon's address to his son, and with him to all to whom the word of God comes, "My son, cease from the instruction, which causeth to err from the words of understanding;" and also from the solemn and repeated declaration of the Apostle, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed †." Hence learn the awful guilt and danger of all erroneous teachers, which evidently implies, that they cannot be innocent who own and hear them. Are we to deem that person a servant of Christ, and own him in that venerable character, whom an Apostle pronounces accursed; and whose life and doctrines are in direct opposition to the gospel of Christ, though he should possess the talents of an angel? or can we consistently bid him God-speed in promoting the interests of the kingdom of darkness? This is not

* 1 Tim. i. 3. vi. 3. 5. 20, 21. 2 Tim. i. 13. Tit. i. 9. ii. 1. 7. 8. † Gal. i. 8, 9.

the charity the gospel recommends, but the direct perversion of it, and the confounding what is as opposite, and inconsistent with each other as light and darkness; for the tree is known by its fruit, and Christ can have no fellowship with Belial, or those who abet his cause and bear his mark on their forehead, known and read of all men. To alledge that wicked men may declare the truth, and the most erroneous preach better than we can make use of, and have many good things in their public exhibitions; that if they retail error for truth, or artfully blend it therewith, they alone are accountable for the consequences, and we may take what is agreeable to truth, without concerning ourselves about the rest,—reasons wherewith some satisfy themselves who loudly condemn, in the general, what they hear, and those who dispense it; this, to say nothing of the glaring inconsistency of such a conduct, would argue profound ignorance of the will of God and our own hearts; yea, such a profane indifference about matters of infinite moment, in which the glory of God and the salvation of men are deeply interested, as are incompatible with the love of God and of truth, if not descriptive of the children of the father of lies. Where the health, or the life of the body is at stake, do we ever hear any thus reason? Who, in his right mind, would venture to take poison into his stomach, though mixed with the most delicious liquor, or the finest viands served up in the most elegant manner? and yet this is not more fatal in its nature, and certain in its consequences, than errors, especially such as sap the foundation of Christianity and gospel holiness, when they assume the specious garb of truth, take shelter under it, and are dexterously blended therewith.

Every attempt to affix the seal of the God of truth to a falsehood, how criminal in itself! how pernicious to those who are deceived thereby! Should any deny the Divinity of the Son of God, or attempt to impugn the important doctrine of his vicarious and expiatory sufferings; should any entertain wrong notions of these truths, whereby the Holy Spirit ordinarily begins and carries on the divine life in the soul, or refuse the necessity of his divine agency in order to render the gospel effectual on the hearts of men, or go about to explain away his essence, and distinct personal subsistence, into a mere influence; can we suppose God would make choice of such to be workers together with himself in the weighty business of salvation, upon which his own glory so much depends? Will he not rather frown upon their persons, and blast their labours, as adding hypocrisy to rebellion, by pretending to act from his commission, and with an eye to his glory, while they are in arms against him, and habitually oppose his authority? Such as embrace principles that strike at the vitals of religion, and sap the very foundations of Christianity,—principles adapted to flatter the pride and vanity, or to foster the sloth and sensuality of our depraved nature, if promoted to the office of public teachers, what can they do, but corrupt men from the simplicity that is in Christ, and remove them to another gospel?—Such remarks would come in with greater propriety on the latter clause of the verse, was it under consideration; but as it is not intended to prosecute that at the time, I thought proper to give them a place here, as such errors and damnable heresies have gone abroad into the world, and are publicly and avowedly taught both from the pulpit and the press in the day and nation

in which we live. Can the professed lovers and teachers of sacred truth read what the Apostle Jude says, and yet remain indifferent about these things? "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation: it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints." Does not this evidently imply, that they who give up or deny fundamental articles of the Christian creed, are in extreme danger of missing the common salvation, if not absolutely excluded from all interest in it?—enough to awake our zeal in defence of the faith once delivered to the saints.

So various are the errors which have been broached in the church, and are espoused and industriously propagated by many, and so specious and plausible the arguments and reasonings by which they are defended and supported, that what is said of false Messiahs may be applied here, "If it were possible, they would deceive the very elect." Against these, however, the gospel, exhibited in its native simplicity, is an effectual antidote. As the shades of night disappear at the approach of day, or the twinkling stars before the meridian sun, so the mists and darkness of error that smoke from the pit, are soon overpowered by the light and evidence of divine truth, which, like the ark of old, make every dagon fall prostrate before them. It is promised, with respect to Zion's children, and with a particular reference to gospel days, "They shall be all taught of God," and that the Spirit will take of the things of Christ, and shew these unto them; all which he chiefly does by the public ministry of the word. It

is therefore deservedly the habitual concern and endeavour of every faithful minister to guard his people against errors in principle, especially such as sap the very foundations of vital practical religion, and have a pernicious influence on Christian practice,—their concern, that they may be found in the faith, and able to give a reason of the hope that is in them, with meekness and fear; and that they fall not off from their stedfastness through the error and subtilty of the wicked, by which they lie in wait to deceive.

Notwithstanding the lesser mistakes into which such may happen to fall; for the best see but in part, and will be ready to own, that, though called to be teachers of others, themselves have need to be taught the first principles of the oracles of God; yet, having obtained mercy, upon the whole to be faithful, and just notions of these doctrines of scripture, by means of which the holy Spirit for the most part convinces and converts sinners from the error of their way, to the wisdom and obedience of the just, and builds up saints in faith, holiness, and comfort, till translated to these abodes where that which is perfect shall come, they may be considerably useful in preaching the gospel and edifying the mystical body of Christ, while the happy tendency of their pious endeavours herein may be justly compared, as in the text, to the influence of salt in preserving certain bodies from putrefying.

In fine,—Faithful ministers will be likewise careful to guard their people against corrupt and immoral practices, which are inconsistent with the faith and hope of the gospel, and, in proportion as they prevail, subversive of the best interests of society, as well as of individuals. As they are set for the defence

fence of the gospel, by the faithful exhibition of its important truths; so are they also appointed, in virtue of their sacred office, to be the inspectors and guardians of the people's morals. To this do they conduce, by declaring and denouncing that wrath of God which is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, as a powerful motive to break off their sins by repentance, and their iniquities by doing righteously; by private admonition, when necessary, and the sanction of a holy example; thus reproving, rebuking, and exhorting them, as occasion may require, with all long-suffering and doctrine. They will make a difference between the precious and the vile, those who apparently fear and serve God, and those who fear him not, but, perhaps, carry their mark on their fore-head, known and read of all men. Whatever others do, they cannot find in their heart, nay they dare not, through dread of God's displeasure, take the children's bread and cast it unto dogs,—prostitute the sacred ordinances of the gospel to the ignorant, the irreligious and profane, hereby making the table of the Lord contemptible, grieving the hearts of the godly, and hardening the wicked in their impiety. Remissness here has a fatal tendency to subvert the power of godliness, and introduce in its stead a lukewarm empty profession, and, with a certain class of men, to promote scepticism, infidelity, and a total indifference to all religion, which are its native its visible effects wherever it prevails. As all this, by a natural, an almost necessary transition, leads to corruption in morals, so they who herein study to approve themselves to God, by a conscientious discrimination of characters in their admissions to sealing ordinances, comport in this with
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the expressive title given them by our Lord, *The salt of the earth*, by which God maintains the purity of his Church, and promotes the reformation of a people.

But, as under the best means, and most precious advantages, offences will come, those who offend, and occasion scandal, will they proceed with according to the wholesome rules of discipline enjoined in the unerring word, and observed by all reformed and well-regulated churches, that, through the blessing of God on this mean of reclaiming delinquents, they may be brought to a proper sense of their guilt and danger, and recovered from their evil ways; and that others may thence stand in awe of sinning against God by the like practices. Nor is this to be confined to certain classes of open transgressors, while others, perhaps equally, if not more offensive to God and pernicious to society, are suffered to escape without animadversion, it may be without the least public notice. Such as in this respect offend, will they reprove before all, according to the apostolic injunction, without partiality or respect of persons. The omission of this, from whatever pretended motives of prudence or policy, instead of recommending religion to the more loose and profligate part of mankind, and procuring respect to its public teachers, has the direct tendency, as experience shews, to bring both into disrepute; whereas the prudent and impartial observance of ecclesiastic discipline would, through the blessing of God who enjoins it, prove the mean of reclaiming some, and of admonishing and confirming others; and so, of consequence, of preventing many irregularities in society. Such as remain obstinate, and refuse by these means to be reclaimed,

claimed, are they to cut off from all the privileges of church-membership, as troublers of Zion, by whose leaven and root of bitterness many may be leavened and defiled; for much better suffer the amputation of a gangrened limb, than that the whole body should perish with it. — Thus have I considered the Character given by our Lord, in the text, to good and faithful Pastors, as implied in these words, *Ye are the salt of the earth.*

IT now remains that I should conclude the subject with some *Practical Inferences*. And,

I. From the character here given to faithful Pastors, we may justly infer the importance and necessity of their office. While they act in character, and walk by their instructions, they are to be viewed as eminent blessings to society,—as the salt of the earth, and the light of the world, by which God seasons and enlightens the hearts and minds of men with the favour of true piety and sound wisdom. Though the infidel, the profligate, and profane, may deem their office unnecessary, or, at best, but a piece of prudent priestcraft to keep vulgar minds in awe, and the exercise of that office foolishness; yet by this foolishness of preaching it pleaseth God to save them that believe, while those who deem it so shall perish in their wisdom. To such as believe they prove the favour of life unto life; for their best interests are promoted by their means, and themselves rescued from these errors, vices, and follies which prove so fatal to others, and are led into the ways of truth and wisdom, these paths of pleasantness and peace. Salt is not more necessary to season what is unfavoury, and to preserve what is apt to corrupt and putrefy, than the faithful

faithful administration of the gospel is to season and reform the world that lieth in wickedness, and to keep those who are thus seasoned and reformed from relapsing into their former corrupt state. All the wisdom of the ancients, all the philosophy of Greece and Rome, with all the boasted refinements of modern times, are utterly inadequate to this important task. Notwithstanding of these, the world would remain ignorant of the true God, of the nature of that worship he requires, and the way to solid and permanent felicity in a state of immortal existence, had he not himself revealed these in the gospel, which is a light shining in darkness—a light to guide our feet and a lamp to direct our paths, till the day of glory break, and the shadows of present ignorance and imperfection are fled away.

2. From this subject we may farther infer the dignity and excellence of the pastoral office, which we should ever magnify, while we must at the same time own ourselves altogether unworthy to be employed therein. When we consider the benign and important consequences of a gospel ministry, with respect to those who believe, must we not own, that they who obtain mercy to be faithful therein are highly to be esteemed in love for their work's sake? However meanly the great and opulent of the earth may think of it, it reflects real honour upon the most dignified character, independent of all these secular, but foreign advantages, which the world may sometimes attach thereto. They are employed in a service the most noble and interesting of which human nature in the present state is capable. Is it deemed honourable to serve earthly princes in offices of power, trust, and extensive influence, or to represent their person

person on important occasions? Why, every faithful minister of the gospel serves one infinitely higher than the kings of the earth, and that in the most honourable, and, to his fellow-men, the most beneficial capacity. All of that honoured description are ambassadors for Christ, to beseech guilty, perishing men to be reconciled to God, and that in God's name, and in Christ's stead, whose word and honour are engaged to confirm his message in their mouth, while they stand in his counsel, and act agreeable to his instructions. Nay more, they are called workers together with God himself, in a work which engaged the attention of a whole Trinity from eternal ages, and which involves the most interesting consequences to all ranks and descriptions of men. When the Son of the Highest appeared in our world, it was in the character of a preacher of righteousness. Though the Prince of the kings of the earth, by whom they reign and decree justice, and having on his vesture and thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS; yet we hear him saying, by his prophet, and afterwards in person, at the opening of his own ministry, "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, "because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good "tidings to the meek, to preach the gospel to the "poor, deliverance to the captives, and recovering of "sight to the blind; to preach the acceptable year "of the Lord *." Well might Solomon, then, though the greatest of men that ever filled a throne, prefix the title of Preacher to that of King in Jerusalem, as one in which he no less gloried, and by which his name shall be transmitted with equal honour to latest

* If. lxi. 1. Luke iv. 18. 19.

posterity *. When the kingdoms of this world are no more, and all their pomp and pageantry vanished as a dream, the effects of a gospel ministry shall remain, yea, prove a source of inconceivable bliss or endless wo to countless myriads of our race. What respect then is due to the message of grace in the gospel, and to those that bring it, while they act agreeably to the spirit, obligations, and ends of their sacred office? for, says the prophet, "How beautiful
 " upon the mountains are the feet of him that bring-
 " eth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bring-
 " eth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation,
 " that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" which the Apostle quotes, when writing to the Romans, and incorporates with the New Testament †. Though it hath pleased God to put this inestimable treasure, not indeed into such precious golden vessels as angels, but into frail unpromising earthen ones, yet is this in order that the excellency of the power may be felt and acknowledged to be of God and not of man; not by any means to diminish the authority of his word in their mouth, for these ministring spirits, in their embassies to men, could not pretend to a higher authority than that wherewith Christ invests his ordinary servants. They are by office *the salt of the earth, and the light of the world*, and while they retain their favour, and shine as stars, by the reflected beams of the Sun of Righteousness, how dignified their character, and how salutary and extensive their influence!

3. From this subject it is likewise very natural to observe, That the faithful discharge of the pastoral

* Eccl. i. 1. † Isa. lii. 7. Rom. x. 15.

office is a matter of no easy or common attainment. It requires the most unwearied diligence and application, the greatest prudence and patience, and the most unshaken resolution and firmness of mind. The consideration of this led an apostle to cry out, "Who is sufficient for these things?" What betwixt the obstinacy of some, the humours and caprice of others, and the frailties and imperfections even of the best, with the concerns of their own souls, and the opposition that ariseth to all from their own hearts, they must lay their account to meet with many hardships and difficulties, many thing grievous to flesh and blood. Perhaps the strongest proofs and expressions of their Christian love and pastoral fidelity may excite hatred, and procure reproaches; for admonition and reproof, however necessary, are, to the wicked and unconverted, like salt lighting upon a sore, which causeth a painful sensation. Yet need they not sink under the burden, or give way to despondency; for their Helper is mighty, and as their day of duty or trial, services or sufferings is, so shall their strength also be. That God, of whom all their sufficiency is, can make them able ministers of the New Testament, wise to win souls, and crown their labours with success on earth, and an ample reward of grace in heaven. The Master they serve sends none a warfare on their own charges; for these whom he calls to labour in his vineyard will obtain mercy of him to be faithful, and the powerful supplies of his grace and Spirit to help in the time of need. He who walks amidst the golden candlesticks, holds the stars in his right hand, directs their motions, and makes them shine by his imparted light. Relying on his promise, and cleaving to him in the path of

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duty with full purpose of heart, the everlasting arms of his power, mercy, and faithfulness, shall be underneath and round about them; while his grace is made sufficient for them, and his strength perfected in their weakness. May they not then glory in their very infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon them, and say, with the Apostle, We can do and bear all things through Christ strengthening us? for their fidelity and success in his gospel is not owing to any power or might of their own; but to the Spirit of the Lord God of hosts, as himself assures us by his Prophet. Who would not then be cordial and hearty in the service of so good a Master?—a service in itself so honourable, to precious souls so interesting, and to the faithful therein attended with such liberal succours and happy consequences. Once more,

4. Are ministers termed in the text *the salt of the earth*? then, in order to answer this character, it should be their great and habitual concern to be themselves seasoned by the grace and Spirit of God, and the knowledge of the doctrines of salvation, evidencing and adorning these by a corresponding practice, as they would hope and wish to be the mean of seasoning others. In order to be useful, and give full proof of their ministry, reading, meditation, and prayer are indispensably necessary, and that so long as they remain in this imperfect state, where the best see but in part, and prophecy but in part. If not taught of God themselves the knowledge of the truth as in Jesus, and a facility of imparting it to others, to pretend to teach and instruct in his name and by his authority, would be daring and fatal presumption; for none but those who themselves submit to be taught

taught of Christ, as their Prophet, are fit and authorised to be public teachers in his Church. If the blind lead the blind, must not both, of course, fall in the ditch? To none does the chief Shepherd commit the care of feeding his lambs and his sheep, who cannot, in some measure of sincerity, answer with Simon, on a certain occasion, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee;" that it is my earnest desire to do so, and grief of heart that I love thee no better. Can it be once supposed, that those will travail as in birth till Christ is formed in the hearts of others the hope of glory, who never yet saw their own need of him, nor felt the least genuine concern to obtain an interest in him, whose hearts are full of enmity against him, and vital godliness and life, in one form or other, a sad contrast to the spirit and ties of their sacred office? To all of this complexion doth God say, "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant into thy mouth?" Let all then invested with the sacred character bear in mind what our Lord saith in the clause annexed to our text, "But if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and troden under foot of men." Here we have the character and the doom of unfaithful pastors—the one despicable and in a manner hopeless, and the other solemn and alarming. Though such should not be cast out of the church, and cut off as troublers, by the exercise of proper discipline, yea, though they should climb their way to its highest honours and emoluments among men, yet does God

* Psalm l. 16.

often make them contemptible, even in a present world, in the eyes both of good and bad men, and in the state to come will exclude them the mansions of felicity, and leave them to sink under the intolerable pressure of shame, misery, and everlasting contempt; for, verily, in the present honours and emoluments annexed to their office, they have all their reward. What manner of persons ought they then to be in all sobriety, godliness, and ministerial fidelity!

Must we not own, my Reverend Fathers and Brethren who now hear me, and have the honour to be put in trust with the ministry, must we not own, and that with the deepest humility, that, if the Lord was strict to mark our manifold failures and defects in the discharge of it, we could not stand up before him, nor answer for one of many thousands? What reason have we to lament how far we come short of answering the character in the text, in all the particulars in which it has been viewed? Comparing ourselves, not merely with the first teachers of Christianity, who were in so eminent a sense *the salt of the earth*, but with many servants of Christ even in modern times, what reason have we to blush and be ashamed upon the comparison! Compared to them, how cold our zeal, and faint our endeavours in promoting the cause of Christ! How exceeding deficient in point of heavenly mindedness, personal holiness, and close walking with God! Though called to be teachers of others, I am persuaded each of us will be ready to own for himself, that he hath need to be taught the first principles of the oracles of God. In all this, however, I hope it is our study, prayer, and ambition, to be enabled to follow on to know the Lord, and grow in

in conformity to his divine image, and in the faithful discharge of our important trust. If we are helped to do any thing to his glory and the edification of his people, let the praise of all be ever ascribed to himself, from whom our help, and any success we may have, alone come. Are we enabled in any measure to answer our character as *the salt of the earth*, this is owing to his being made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification; for of him all our fitness and fruit are found. While we glory in his cross and make our boast of him, let us imitate, so often as we officiate at his altar, as well we may, the ministers of the upper sanctuary, who veil their faces and their feet before him, as unworthy to tread his hallowed courts, or to behold the bright effulgence of his essential glory.

To conclude,—Let all that profess the faith of Christ, and are called by his name, bear in mind that they too are sacredly bound, in their respective stations, to approve themselves the salt of the earth, by making the light of an exemplary deportment and holy conversation so to shine before men, that others, seeing their good works, may be thence led to glorify their heavenly Father. Many are the happy consequences of such a conduct, both to themselves and others, and that in regard of time and eternity; whereas, should the professors of Christianity become like insipid salt that hath lost its savour, abandoning the spirit and practice of it, while only the mere form is retained, what can they expect, but that Jesus should disown and reject them, when he will come the second time, in his own and in his Father's glory, for the complete salvation of those that look for him, saying, "Depart from me, I never knew you, ye workers of
B b 3 "iniquity."

"iniquity?" May God enable us by his grace so to improve the gospel of his Son, with all its inestimable privileges, that we may now, in our respective capacities, prove *the salt of the earth, and the light of the world*; and then be addressed with that best of all applauses, "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joys of your Lord;" and, for this important purpose, may his own effectual and enriching blessing, so accompany this and every other mean of religious improvement, as to make them subservient to the advancement of his glory, and the salvation of his Church and people. *Amen.*

T H E CHARGE TO THE MINISTER.

Reverend Dear Brother,

CONSIDERING the solemn engagements you have just now come under, in the presence of God and many witnesses, and the situation in which you now stand, I hope you will bear with me a little, while, in the discharge of the duty devolved upon me on this occasion, I tender you, with all due deference and affection, a few things respecting your future conduct in the sacred work and office to which you are now solemnly set apart by the imposition of the hands of the Presbytery.——As you would wish to give full proof of your ministry, to finish your course with joy, and obtain the approbation of the chief Shepherd
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at his appearance, you will see the propriety, yea, the absolute necessity of attending well to the state and exigences of your own soul; that, while you are called to keep the vineyard of others, your own may not be neglected. Be concerned then to feel and cherish the life and power of religion on your own heart, as consisting in supreme love to God; delight in his service, communion and fellowship with him in the various means of grace; and a growing meetness for his immediate and glorious presence; that so, when you have preached the gospel to others, you yourself may not be rejected at length; as insipid salt that hath, beyond recovery, lost all its flavour, and become neither fit for the land nor the dunghill, but to be cast out and troden under foot of men. Give all due diligence to make your calling and election sure, and to maintain upon your own mind a lively sense of your interest in the love of God, by all the proper evidences and expressions thereof in your temper and conduct; that your conversation may in all respects be such as becometh the gospel of our Lord and Saviour. Endeavour to grow in grace, as well as in divine knowledge, and to cherish upon your own mind an habitual sense of God's presence and perfections, a becoming reverence for him and divine things, and to bear in view that solemn account you must in a little render, at his enlightened tribunal, of the important trust now committed to you, that this may be with joy and not with grief. Let your requests to God for counsel, assistance, and direction in the discharge of the various parts of your duty, and his blessing upon them, be frequent and fervent, and your hopes of this, and the acceptance of your person and services, be placed in the concurring agency of the Spirit,

Spirit, and mediation of Jesus, never presuming to enter on any in your own strength. If love to God, to the Redeemer, and the souls of men, rule supreme in your heart, this will have a powerful and happy influence on the whole of your deportment, sweetly constraining to the faithful discharge of every duty, and leading to count nothing too great to do or to suffer for the glory of his name and the salvation of his people. Grace in lively exercise animates the pious minister to vigour, activity, diligence, and application in his Master's service; makes him honest and impartial, bold and courageous, qualifications exceeding requisite in the discharge of his duty. As it animates him to his work, so does it likewise mightily assist in it, and greatly tend to crown it with success. Hereby he is disposed to give himself to prayer, as well as to the ministry of the word, and made to find pleasure and delight in both, while it at the same time imparts life, light, and enlargement of heart in his public performances. True religion, as felt in the heart, in its life and power, promotes the love and knowledge of the truth, an aptness and facility in communicating it to others, and powerfully influences to a pious and exemplary behaviour. In all these respects it highly merits the regard of every public teacher, abstracted from his own particular interest in it as a Christian; whereas, suppose him a stranger to its divine power and constraining influence, what are his public services but a mere solemn drudgery, a hypocritical farce, in which the heart is little or nothing engaged, unless when the passing breath of human applause fans the latent sparks of ambition within, and spirits up to seeming fervour and devotion.

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I would gladly hope, Brother, you are actuated by nobler ends and motives, and that the expressions and fruits of piety in your external conduct proceed from a very different root, even the grace of God in the heart, as a well of water springing up to everlasting life. In this view, I need scarce remind you whence all your supplies must come; that the new creature, the life and power of religion in the soul, are as necessarily dependent upon Jesus their Author, for their vigour, growth, and improvement, as for their original formation. In him alone you can be complete as a Christian, complete as a minister of the New Testament; and to his fulness therefore let your eye be ever directed, that thence you may receive and grace for grace. It will be ever happiest with yourself in your public work, and with the people who attend your ministrations, when divine grace is most lively and operative in your own heart, and when you are helped to live most under the practical influence of the truths you preach to others.

With regard to your private conduct, let this be in all respects exemplary and becoming the gospel, that those with whom you associate, and have access to see your pious conversation coupled with a fear of offending either God or man, may take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus, imbibed his Spirit, and profited by his example. A minister's pious, prudent, humble, and circumspect deportment in private life, goes farther to support his character and the dignity of his office, and to secure respect to his person, and the acceptance of his public labours, than the most extensive erudition, or shewy gifts and talents. While those in the sacred office lead the way to their people, in whatever is pious, virtuous, lovely,

lovely, of good report, and praise-worthy, may it not be expected, that they will prove like the pillar of fire which gave light and direction to the children of Israel in their way to the land of promise, and the star which conducted the Eastern sages to the infant Saviour? With Joshua, the pious Jewish leader, let it be your firm resolution, that whatever others do, as for you, and all under your immediate inspection, so far as your influence can go, you will serve the Lord, presenting to him the morning and evening sacrifice of adoration, thanksgiving, and praise; and exhibiting an example of the faithful discharge of all domestic and relative duties. In the dwellings of the righteous is heard the voice of joy and melody; and it is recorded, to the immortal honour of a Roman Centurian, that he feared God, with all his house, and prayed to God alway; a practice and example highly worthy of the observance and imitation of all invested with the sacred character. With what propriety can we recommend the exercises of social, domestic religion to others, if we ourselves are known to neglect them, either wholly or upon the slightest temptations?

With respect to the discharge of your public trust as a minister of Christ, let this occupy your thoughts, your care, and your time, and engage your earnest prayers and diligent application, so far as may be consistent with a prudent care of your health, and the friendly intercourse of social life. Whatever attainments you may have already made in the knowledge of the scriptures of truth, which are able to make wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus; able to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good word and work; yet still
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there is much room for farther improvements; and continued progress here is absolutely necessary, if we would not lose what we have already attained. Search then the scriptures daily, and dig deep into these sacred mines of evangelical truth, that, like a scribe well instructed into the kingdom or dispensation of the gospel, and good steward of the mysteries and manifold grace of God, you may be able to bring forth, from these unsearchable treasures and riches of Christ, things new and old; that, like a pastor according to God's own heart, you may feed your people with knowledge and sound understanding. Let your resolution be that of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, I determine to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified, and of his gospel I will never be ashamed. The various doctrines therein contained study to preach, as God gives opportunity and the cases and exigencies of your people may require, improving these to all the important purposes of universal holiness, that those who attend your ministry may attain a connected view of the Christian system, and its happy tendency, in all its parts, to promote the glory of God, the good of society, and the happiness of individuals. Besides the various cases of real Christians, which claim your particular attention, in your public discourses, you are to bear in mind, that your audience is composed of two classes, as opposite to each other in their state, tempers, manners, and prospects, as light is to darkness, or Christ to Belial; I mean the righteous and the wicked, and it is well if the latter class does not comprise by far the greater part. Hence ariseth the necessity of rightly dividing the word of life; giving every one their own portion, not addressing our
hearers

hearers as if they were all saints, a practice fatally calculated to sooth conscience, and lull them asleep in security; but telling the wicked and impenitent, with all freedom and plainness of speech, that it shall be ill with them; that they shall reap the fruit of their own doings, be filled with their own devices; and that, while they refuse to embrace the Saviour and be reclaimed from their evil ways, God is angry with them every day, and declares there is no peace for them. Such plain, conscientious dealing, I am aware, is not the most agreeable to our hearers, or pleasant in itself; yet is it absolutely necessary in its own place, as we would not incur the displeasure of God, and bring the blood of precious souls upon our own head. Fidelity here may indeed open the mouths of some, and lead them to tax us as legal, or mistaking our province; for there are not a few who would have the ministers of Christ to dwell perpetually on the privileges and promises of the gospel, without insisting on the tempers and duties of Christianity, or enforcing repentance and application to the blood of atonement by the terrors of the Lord. Though some, not knowing what they say, or whereof they affirm, should brand this good old way of preaching, this piece of ministerial fidelity; yet hath it the sanction of our Lord's own example, and that of his prophets and apostles; and therefore it need not surprize us, should such addressees be deemed hard and intolerable sayings; for so were his who spake as never man spoke, and so have been the addressees of many of his faithful servants since. Is it not then even honourable to be condemned in such good company? To guard here against that fear of man which causeth a snare, we need only read God's repeated solemn charge to the prophet

prophet Ezekiel, under the character of a watchman over the house of Israel, and the weighty consideration by which it is enforced; namely, the requisition of the blood of that soul at his hand that perisheth through his neglect of faithful warning*. That this charge, with the weighty argument by which it is enforced, applies to all the ministers of the gospel, none will call in question, who for a moment considers the nature of their office; for are they not all set to watch for souls, as they who must soon render an account? I need not caution or remind you here, Brother, what use you are to make of the expressions of God's displeasure at sin and sinners, to be met with almost every where in his word; that they are to be used, like the sword of the avenger of blood, to point out the necessity of an immediate escape to the refuge revealed in the gospel; the necessity of betaking themselves, without delay, to the covert of a Redeemer's blood and righteousness, as an effectual shelter from the wrath to come, who must at the same time be exhibited as the only the all-sufficient Saviour, and the great end of the law for righteousness to them that believe; and if thus used, not even the most guilty need retort, with the demoniacs of old, "Torment us not before the time." This may also serve a valuable purpose, even with respect to the best, as hereby the demerit of sin is pointed out, which shews their obligations of gratitude to the Son of God, who interposed in their behalf, and poured out his soul unto death as an oblation for their sins; and a reason also suggested, why they should be humble, and adore the freedom of that grace which makes them to dif-

* Ezek. iii. 17,—22. xxxiii. 7,—17.

fer. It is given by God himself, as a distinguishing mark of his people, that they tremble at his word, no doubt the word of his threatening; and certain I am, these who cannot endure to hear this, when urged in its proper place and manner, give not hereby any proof of their being of that happy number.

Yet, though this must be occasionally insisted on, as we would approve ourselves faithful for God and to the souls of men, the grace, the promises, the privileges, and the prospects of the gospel, in their relation to Christ, through whom we enjoy them, claim our chief attention, both as means of comforting real Christians under their various distresses and trials, and also as so many powerful arguments and motives to induce the impenitent of all descriptions to break off their sins by repentance, and their iniquities by doing righteously: "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith the Lord; speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem." As such stand often in need of comfort and direction, so likewise to have their pure minds stirred up by way of remembrance, and to be exhorted, by such arguments and motives as the gospel suggests, to persevere in the faith, and abound in all the fruits of piety and holiness. Evangelic preachers have been often reproached by legalists, these pretended zealots for strict purity of manners, with neglecting to recommend the duties of morality to their people, and dwelling perpetually on the promises and privileges of the gospel, in order to become popular, and conciliate the favour of their hearers who would have it so; and this reproach is indiscriminately cast by some on all who coincide not in religious sentiments with themselves. Though it is possible there may be some reason for this complaint in certain cases,

cases, as men are but too apt in avoiding one extreme to verge toward the opposite; yet I am persuaded it is in general far otherwise; for instead of making void the law of God, by holding forth the freedom and sovereignty of Divine grace, they establish it, and shew that the doctrine of our acceptance with God, through the righteousness of Christ alone, is not only perfectly consistent with the necessity of inherent personal holiness, but, indeed, the most noble and powerful motive to excite thereto. I hope, Brother, that both your life and doctrine will afford a continued refutation of this slander. What the Apostle Paul addresses to Titus on this head, the Spirit of God enjoins on all put in trust with the ministry, and now upon you, "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works: these things are good and profitable unto men*;" and, I may add, by abounding in such fruits and evidences of faith, our heavenly Father is glorified. When these good works the Apostle would have Christians careful to maintain, are represented, not as the ground of our acceptance with God, either in whole or in part, or qualifications to recommend to his favour; but as the genuine fruits and evidences of a true faith, the native and necessary expression of their love and gratitude; the inseparable consequence, not the inducing cause of their vital union to Jesus as branches in him the true vine, without which they cannot subsist; the effects of the continued supplies of his grace and Spirit, and their meetness for heaven, not by any

* Titus iii. 8.

means their title to it,—then do we allow them that place in the Christian system which God intended, and in recommending and enforcing them, we act in character as the ministers of Christ. But to recommend and enforce these from different or opposite ends and motives, would be to counteract and subvert the gospel of Christ, to obscure the freedom and the glory of his grace, and lead men to build their hopes for eternity upon a foundation of sand.

In fine, to sum up all in one word—Follow Jesus as your teacher, pattern, and example, as himself enjoins, and he will make you, according to his promise, a fisher of men, wise to win souls to himself. Walk with him in peace and equity, and let the law of truth be in your mouth, and iniquity never found in your lips, as you would wish and hope to be the mean of turning many away from iniquity. The word of God, that precious directory in every station, abounds with the best rules and maxims by which to form and regulate our conduct, as ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of his kingdom; particularly Paul's Epistles to Timothy, with a passage or two from which, permit me to conclude this address: “Be thou an example of the believers, “in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in “faith, in purity, giving attendance to reading, to “exhortation, to doctrine. Meditate upon these “things, give thyself wholly to them; that thy pro- “fiting may appear to all, and in all things. Take “heed unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine; continue “in them; for in doing this, thou shalt both save “thyself, and them that hear thee. Hold fast the “form of sound words in faith and love, which is “in Christ Jesus, and study to shew thyself appro-
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“ved unto God, a workman that needeth not be a-
“shamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Flee
“also youthful lusts, and every species of iniquity;
“but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with
“them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart;
“being gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient; in
“meekness instructing those that oppose themselves;
“if God peradventure will give them repentance to
“the acknowledging of the truth. I charge thee
“therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ,
“who shall judge the quick and the dead at his ap-
“pearing, and his kingdom: preach the word; be
“instant in season, out of season; reprove, re-
“buke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine;”
and, to help you herein, may the grace of God be
with you, and the Lord Jesus Christ be with your
spirit; that you may finish your course with joy, and
the ministry you have received of the Lord Jesus; to
testify the gospel of the grace of God, and so have
many seals of your ministry among this people, who
shall be to you a crown of joy and rejoicing in the
day of the Lord; at which solemn period, may you
and they be honoured with a place at his right hand,
and welcomed by him to his heavenly kingdom and
glory.

THE
ADDRESS TO THE CONGREGATION*.

My Christian Brethren,

LET me now subjoin a few things to you. — God hath been pleased, in the course of his kind providence, to send you now a Pastor, to break the bread of life among you, in the room of your late worthy and faithful minister, who saw meet to demit his charge into the hands of the Presbytery. I hope not a few of you have regretted your loss hereby, who have received benefit under his ministry, and shall be to him for a joy and crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord. Bless God, however, who hath not left you to lament this event as they who have no hope; for now you are again provided with a minister of your own unanimous choice, after repeated trials of his gifts and talents among you. From the solemn transaction to which you have this day been witness, and in which you are so deeply concerned as parties, you can easily infer something of the weight and importance of that pastoral charge devolved on your minister in your behalf. This charge is truly interesting in its nature, serious and everlasting in its consequen-

* It is proper to apprise such of those who heard this discourse from the pulpit as may now favour it with a perusal, that it has received, in transcribing, some additions throughout; and that the Address to the People is almost wholly different from what was then delivered, as the speaker, in that part of the service, was obliged to content himself with a few extemporary thoughts.

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ees, both with respect to him and you. As the relation between pastor and people is reciprocal, and of divine institution, so the obligations resulting from it are mutual and sacred. Has he solemnly engaged to the faithful discharge of the important duties of his sacred function towards you? you, on the other hand, by the unanimous call you have given him, to come and take the oversight of you in the Lord, have become no less sacredly bound to carry yourselves, in all respects, towards him as a minister of Christ, and steward of the manifold grace of God, so long as he acts in character, and comports to his instructions from above. Esteem him very highly in love for his work and Master's sake *, and because of the sacred relation in which he stands to you. As a man, a Christian, and a minister, speak respectfully of him on every occasion, and be not ready to receive any report, or indulge any surmise to his prejudice; much less to whisper it to others under a professed concern for the interests of religion. Cherish that love for his person, and reverence for his office, which will dispose you to hear him with candour, and receive his instructions, admonitions, and even rebukes, when necessary, with cordial affection, and an unfeigned desire to profit by them. Let his happiness as a man, his prosperity as a Christian, and his improvement and success as a minister of the gospel, engage your daily prayers for him, and best efforts to promote them. The more you are exercised this way, the more may you expect the Lord will make him a blessing to you. If the inspired servants of Christ saw and owned their need of an interest in the pray-

* Thess. v. 13.

ers of their Christian brethren, and repeatedly solicit it, how much more may we? and while we act in character, as the salt of the earth, doubtless you will have an interest in ours. Think not that any infirmities (for from these the most perfect character on earth is not free), which a longer and more intimate acquaintance with your minister may discover, will warrant the decline of your love towards him, or esteem for him, much less the rejection of the message God sends you by his mouth; for the authority and, I may add, success of God's word are not suspended on the perfection of the character of its dispensers. Though in this view, among others, they are justly termed *earthen vessels*, yet into these earthen vessels doth God deign to put the inestimable treasure of his gospel. These human frailties, and even sins, which God bears with and forgives in his servants, he would have his people likewise to bear with and forgive, from a sense of their own great need of the Divine forbearance and forgiveness; for what man is there that liveth and sinneth not? While some, through a criminal indifference towards religion and the purity of its institutions, can bear with almost any practices in its public teachers, there are others who run to the opposite extreme, and will perhaps make them offenders merely for a word, or the least impropriety of conduct. It is a well known fact, that they who have the most humbling sense of their own weaknesses and infirmities, are ever most disposed to make candid allowances for those of others, and to put the most charitable constructions on their actions they will bear; whereas a censorious unbearing spirit is, in general, found to originate from pride, self-ignorance, and hypocrisy. Real love, the reigning,

reigning, the characteristic passion of every true Christian, covers a multitude of infirmities, and touches even the sores of others with a gentle and lenient hand. In this view, it deserves our notice what the Spirit of God says of Elias, who was so eminent for his piety and interest in the court of heaven, that yet he was a man subject to like passions as we are, and this remark is introduced by a charge to confess our faults one to another, and pray one for another, to which it is added, “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much;” which plainly supposeth, that even such a one will have faults to be born with and forgiven*; and that, notwithstanding of these, his prayers may be efficacious with God for his Christian brethren. Was the time spent by many in descanting upon and exposing the defects and inconsistencies to be met with in the conduct of ministers, to be devoted to prayer for them, what a blessing might thence result to their own souls, and to the Church of God! Let none, however, imagine that these remarks are intended as an apology for the vices or glaring improprieties of any of our order—God forbid! yet do they suggest sufficient reason why we should draw a veil of charity over their disallowed infirmities and lesser faults.

I need scarce remind you, Brethren, to be sparing of your minister's time; for though, acting in character, he will be courteous and of easy access to the poorest of his flock, and ready to tender his best advice when asked, both in their temporal and spiritual concerns, yet a due attention to his own improvement, by study and the discharge of the duties of his

* James v. 16. 17.

office, will leave him little time for giving or receiving unnecessary visits, from which, in general, little real good is to be expected. But though he should find little time for visits of mere ceremony, yet when overtaken with personal or domestic affliction, you may expect he will be ready, upon the first intimation, to offer you his sympathy, his prayers, and best advice, and to assist you, to the utmost of his power, in making a proper improvement of the various dispensations of divine providence; all which is a service he not only owes you from a principle of duty, but will always wish to render from the constraining influence of love.

Permit me farther to exhort you to make conscience of a regular attendance upon his public ministrations, never absenting from these but when the reasons of your absence are such as you can plead at the bar of God. Your duty to God, a regard to your own Christian improvement, and to the comfort and encouragement of your minister in his work demand this of you, not to mention how you are bound to set such an example before others; or the fatal train of consequences which an opposite practice draws after it, however common it is become in our day. That you may profit by the gospel, study to hear it without prejudice or passion, and as new born babes desire, and with meekness receive the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby*. As in the natural world a certain insect converts that into poison which to another affords materials for the most delicious honey, and all owing to their different natures; so, in hearing the word of God, these truths

* 1 Pet. iii. 2.

which are to some the favour of spiritual life unto eternal life, prove to others the favour of spiritual death into eternal death; and that as the native consequence of the different dispositions wherewith they are heard. That we may become wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus and belief of the truth, with pious Cornelius let us say, so often as we present ourselves in the sanctuary of God to hear his word, "We are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God;" and with the Israelites to Moses, on a certain occasion, "Speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear it*." This is what the apostles stile the obedience of faith, and all this enters into the idea of following Christ, so that if such is not our temper and dispositions in hearing the word, profess what we will, we are none of his. Such as thus hear will not be for receiving or rejecting truths impressed with the same authority, as the humour strikes them, and they think they make for them or militate against them; or perhaps ready to quarrel with the speaker, as if he had them in his eye and meant to mark them out; but will have an ear for the reproofs, warnings and admonitions of the word, as well as for its promises; and in regard of both will be ready to say, "Speak, Lord for thy servants hear." Such discourses meet their warmest approbation as find them out, probe them to the quick, and in a manner dissect the inner man, and disclose the most latent thoughts, desires, and intents of the heart. As your minister, answering to his character, as the salt of the earth, will be

* Acts x. 33. Deut. v. 27.

much concerned, both before and after sowing the seed of the word, for the blessing of God to attend it; so herein you are to strive together with him by your prayers, as you would wish that seed to take root, spring up, and produce fruit to eternal life. As the husbandman is at all due pains to prepare his soil, break up the fallow-ground, and cover his seed when committed to the furrows, anxiously desiring, and patiently waiting for the early and latter rain, without all which he knows it would be vain to expect to reap in harvest; so should the hearers of the gospel look up to God by earnest prayer, to prepare their hearts for the reception thereof, and command his blessing upon it; and, by meditation thereon, bide it in their hearts, that the incorruptible seed, being watered with the due and rain of his Spirit, and cherished with the animating beams of the Sun of Righteousness, its fruit may be unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. Under the law such animals were reputed unclean, as did not chew the cud, and can we deem these the pure in heart, who never hide God's word there, that they may not sin against him.

If your minister is denied at any time in public that liberty and holy freedom which are so desirable in the service of God, and, every thing considered, this may often be the case be he ever so diligent and faithful, yet, instead of imputing this to him, or thinking the worse of him for it, be so charitable and candid as to acknowledge your own sins may be the cause. It is not every defect in the manner or matter of a minister's public exhibitions, nor even every fault or impropriety in his practice, that will warrant his people to undervalue him, much less to withdraw from

from his ministry. The relation between pastor and people, and the stipulation implied therein being mutual, as the former cannot in duty and conscience relinquish his charge, whatever trials he may meet with, without a regular demission from it; so neither can the latter decline or desert his ministrations, be their complaints what will, without incurring the displeasure of him who hates putting away, so long as his relation to his flock continues firm and valid; for God is the God of order and not of confusion, as in all the churches of Christ.

When any grounds of such complaints occur, and occur they may at times, in the present imperfect state of the church, notwithstanding every precaution to prevent them, nothing but the refusal of justice on the part of those whose province it is impartially to administer it, or unnecessary protraction and delays, and that after every constitutional method hath been tried to obtain justice and redress, can warrant such a step; and not even that in every case, unless we would open a door to anarchy and schism; for a less evil is often to be patiently born, in order to prevent a greater. Here, as in all other cases, the Wisdom from above is profitable to direct, and all her children will study to justify her in their conduct, by conforming to her unerring maxims.

I hope, Brethren, I need scarce observe, and that you will bear with me while I do, that it is your indispensable duty to maintain your minister, according to his station and your ability, and that not by constraint, but of a willing mind. It is evidently the will of the great Lord of the vineyard, and who may dispute his authority, or tax the equity of his decision? that they who labour therein should reap tem-

poral good things from those unto whom they sow spiritual *; for the workman is worthy of his meat †, and the labourer of his reward ‡. Can we once suppose, that they who prize the gospel as good tidings of great joy, love its Divine Author, and derive spiritual benefit to their souls from beth, will count it a great matter, if its dispensers should in return reap their carnal things? and, indeed, such as are of that mind seem neither to have seen the value of the gospel, nor felt its transforming power. As under the Mosaic institution, they who ministred about holy things lived of the things of the temple; and they who waited at the altar were partakers with the altar in the offerings of the people, and that by a divine appointment; even so, saith the Apostle, hath the Lord himself ordained, that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel §. It is the express will and command of our divine Lord and Master, as recorded by the pen of an Apostle, a command founded on reasons benign and wise, "That they who are taught in the word, should communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things ||." Of this are they to make conscience, according to that measure of prosperity God hath given them in the world, as they regard the authority by which it is enforced, the glory of God, the honour and success of religion, and the edification of their own souls. Is not this necessary, that so the minds of their teachers may not be kept in a state of anxious suspense about their own subsistence and reputation, or be tempted to entangle themselves, like too many, with secular affairs, which would not be to the profit of

* 1 Cor. ix. 11. † Mat. x. 10. ‡ 1 Tim. v. 18.

§ 1 Cor. ix. 13. 14. ¶ Gal. vi. 6.

their hearers; but that they may, with greater composure and cheerfulness, attend to the more important cares of their sacred function? From the passage referred to above, as also from sundry others, it plainly appears, that it is not the will of Zion's King that his subjects should be eased of this burden—this tribute of gratitude and love, and the earth left, in this respect, to help the Woman. Whatever secular advantages legal securities may here give, and however much a sordid illiberal spirit, when it prevails among professing Christians in periods of declension and lukewarmness, may seem to render these eligible; yet such advantages appear not to have Christ's sanction; for they comport not with the mode of maintaining his servants under the Old Testament, as instituted by Moses, nor with that prescribed by our Lord himself and his apostles under the New, and exemplified in the Church, till outward ease and prosperity, under the Emperor Constantine, had marred the comely beauty of Zion, and inspired the professed ministers of the lovely Jesus with pride, avarice, and ambition; whence the ecclesiastic came to be modelled by the civil constitution of the empire, till it gradually arose to the enormous system of the Papal hierarchy, that man of sin which God threatens to destroy with the sword of his mouth and the brightness of his coming.

Let such professing Christians as would evade the force of Christ's precept, and their obligation to him in this respect, weigh well what the Apostle adds in the passage above quoted, and prefaces with a solemn caution, which, being immediately connected with it, applies here with the utmost propriety, "Be not de-

"soweth, that shall he reap *;" whatsoever a man soweth, whether good or bad, whether he be liberal or sparing in it, his return shall correspond thereto, and that both in kind and degree. If this holds true, no wonder these live at a poor rate in the Christian life, if they are not total strangers thereto, who can expend with greater cheerfulness and liberality on the superfluities, the vanities, or follies of life, than in contributing to the support of a gospel-administration in the world, and to the supply of their needy brethren. "The liberal," says the prophet, "deviseeth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand †;" and, adds the wise king of Israel to the same effect, "The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth, shall be watered also himself ‡;" for "God loveth a cheerful giver §." Does he not, in the course of his providence, always verify, if not in a temporal, at least in a spiritual sense, which still more merits our regard, what he records by the pen of the same illustrious writer, as introductory to what he says above, "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty ||?" There is that scattereth; that is, for pious and charitable purposes, wherein the glory of God and the good of his people are concerned, and yet increaseth; for they find in experience, that the more they give this way, the more they have, and the greater the pleasure wherewith they enjoy it.

Our Lord never meant that the support of the sacred institutions of his gospel, and the relief of his

* Gal. vi. 7. † Isa. xxxii. 8. ‡ Prov. xi. 25.

§ 2 Cor. ix. 7. || Prov. xi. 24.

poor, both which ought ever to go hand in hand, should be a grievous yoke to any; nor would it indeed ever prove so, did professing Christians in general act according to the means he hath put in their power, and with the tenth part of that cordiality they often discover in securing a favourite temporal object, not suffering this tribute of love to devolve on a few individuals, while they themselves scarce touch it with one of their fingers. Is not the yoke of Christ in this respect easy, and his burden light, compared to that of any other religion that ever prevailed in the world? What is done, therefore, to support its public ministers with decency, according to the sphere they occupy in society, and the benefit derived there-to from their labours, and to relieve the exigencies of Christ's needy members, so far from being a work of supererogation, or a matter of generosity, much less mere charity, as the world accounts the latter, that it is only discharging a duty binding on the conscience in the sight of God towards those who labour among them in holy things, and such as are related to them by the most sacred and endearing ties; and, if performed with this view, the Lord will consider it as done to himself, and reward it accordingly. To think and act otherwise, would be to insult the wisdom of God, and pour contempt on the grace of his Son; as if the enjoyment of what his infinite wisdom hath devised, and blood divine purchased, could not compensate the least outward inconvenience, or temporal consideration. Hereby, too, our Christian brethren would be injured and defrauded, should we refuse to bear part with them, as circumstances permit, in maintaining privileges which we enjoy in

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common, and in which we are all equally interested; and no wonder, in such case, should this procure lean-ness and barrenness to our own souls under the means of grace, and bring a reproach on the cause in which we profess to have embarked. This much, it is hoped, I may be allowed to say on this occasion, as evidently inculcated in the word of God, whose dictates in all things we profess to revere, and that without giving any umbrage for suspicion, as I am not speaking in my own behalf; for all who have heretofore heard me can bear me witness that it is not my manner to drop hints of such things in public; and indeed, to the honour of that body of Christians with which we stand more immediately connected, there is in general very little occasion for it, being forward to this of their own accord.

What remains now but that I should conclude this exercise, too long indeed already, by expressing my best wishes for Zion, and for pastor and people here, which I will do in the language of inspiration, in which, I hope, you will all cordially join.—May the great Head of his Church, and King upon his holy hill of Zion, appoint unto her every dwelling-place, and to all her assemblies pastors according to his own heart, to feed his people with knowledge and sound understanding. With power and divine efficacy may he say to his Church in general, and to this corner of it in particular, “This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell; for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with righteousness, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. There will I make the horn of David to bud.
“I have

"I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed. His
"enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon him
"shall his crown flourish."—And now, Brethren, I
commend you and your pastor to God, and to the
word of his grace, which is able to build you up,
and to give you an inheritance among all them who
are sanctified: And may the God of peace, that
brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that
great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of
the everlasting covenant, make you both perfect in
every good work, to do his will, working in you
that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Je-
sus Christ; to whom be glory in all the Churches.
Amen.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE X.

GENUINE BELIEVERS COMPLETE IN CHRIST.

COLLOSS. ii. 10.

Ye are complete in him.

THIS Epistle Paul wrote when prisoner at Rome, as we learn from the conclusion of it. His great object in it seems to have been to establish the believing Colossians in the important doctrines of Christianity, and guard them from being drawn aside from the purity and simplicity of the gospel, by certain false teachers, who went about to persuade them to join the ceremonies of the Mosaic ritual, and the notions of the Heathen philosophers, to the Christian faith. This he prosecutes in the two first chapters, and in the two last, according to his usual manner, like a wise master-builder, prescribes and recommends the principal duties of piety and holiness. The personal pronoun *him* evidently refers to our Blessed Lord, whom the Christian Colossians are said in the 6th verse to have received, and in whom they are exhorted to walk. Beware, says the Apostle in verse 8th, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. To shew the remarkable propriety of this caution, and the

the great reason there was on their part of complying with it, he adds in the verse immediately preceding, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the "Godhead bodily." In these words a beautiful climax, or gradation, is observable, which makes them the more emphatic and expressive. In him, that is our Divine Redeemer, the person of whom Paul speaks in the context, there is not simply a fulness, a fulness of the Godhead, but all the fulness of the Godhead, and that bodily, or essentially; and all this, not in a transient way, for it dwelleth and resideth in him as its proper receptacle, in order to be communicated, by the agency of the Spirit, to all interested in him, as their several exigencies may require. May we not thence justly infer his supreme Deity, and absolute fitness for the proper discharge of all these important offices which he sustains and executes as our Mediator; and by which, considering the dignity of his Divine person, he is just such a Saviour as we need? Well might the Apostle then add, with respect to all the faithful at Colosse, "And "ye are complete in him;" which may be also said of all that shall believe on the Son of God to the end of time.

This subject opens a wide field of discussion; but all that is intended, through Divine aid, is to illustrate, in a few particulars, the important truth in the text, viz. That real Christians are complete in Christ Jesus their Saviour; concluding with some improvement.

I. They are so then, in the *first* place, as their legal head in point of *justification*. The first man, so long as he continued in his allegiance to the great
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Author of his being, had a legal righteousness in which he stood accepted in the sight of God. Having lost this, however, by his voluntary transgression of the divine prohibition, his posterity, in consequence of their connexion with him as their legal or federal head and representative, are all by nature in a state of guilt and condemnation. In this situation are believers as well as others prior to their conversion to God, through a cordial acceptance of Christ by faith, and the exercise of genuine repentance towards him. He, as the second Adam, commiserating their deplorable case, at his Father's desire and proposal, substituted himself in their law-room and stead, engaged to fulfil all righteousness for them; and, as their surety, to magnify the law and make it honourable, by yielding perfect obedience to its precepts, and complete satisfaction to its penalty. It being impossible for us, on account of the innate depravity of our nature, to obtain justification before God in virtue of any obedience of ours, his own essential and beloved Son, according to his voluntary engagement, actually appeared in the fulness of time in our nature, in the humble form of a servant, and did and suffered therein whatever was necessary to promote the glory of God and our salvation, until he could say upon the cross, "It is finished." Thus, what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh; that is, the inherent corruption of our nature, through which we are unable to come up to its demands, God himself hath effectually done, by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, that, by offering his human nature a sacrifice for sin, he might condemn and destroy it. His obedience, both active and passive, being per-
formed

formed in the room and stead of his people, was accepted of God as a complete satisfaction for all their sins, and an equivalent for eternal life. Being enabled, by the powerful agency of the Divine Spirit, working in and by the word on their hearts, to receive and improve him as made of God unto them *Righteousness*, they are delivered from condemnation, and entitled to eternal life, the sure pledge and earnest of which they receive in their effectual calling. The Righteousness of Christ becomes theirs by imputation on God's part, and believing on theirs; for "this is the name, says the Prophet, by which he shall be called, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**;" and "in him the seed of Israel shall be justified, and glory." They have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of all their sins, which are remitted to them upon believing, by a free, full, and irreversible pardon. Christ and his people are one in the eye of the divine law, as he is the head and they are the members; and consequently, whatever he hath done, as their surety and representative, is imputed to them as if done by themselves; and they, in virtue of the gospel constitution, are entitled to all the blessings that result from and were procured by it. Justification is as complete in the moment the soul first closes with Christ by faith, as in any after period; for then the believer is set free from the guilt of all his past transgressions, and secured from that condemnation to which his future sins would so justly expose him. In this sense alone can it be said with strict propriety, "That God beholds no iniquity in Jacob, or perverseness in Israel;" that the Spouse is "fair, undefiled and without spot." Thus real Christians are complete in Jesus in point
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of justification; for he died, the just One instead of the unjust, that he might bring them near to God, even into a state of favour and acceptance with him here, and to the eternal fruition of him hereafter; and hence there is no condemnation to them that are in him, by faith united to him as their living head, and clothed with his righteousness.

II. We may farther observe, That they are also complete in him with regard to their *sanctification*; for this is perfect in part even in the present state, though not in degree till death. In this these two remarkably differ, that justification is an instantaneous act, but sanctification, on the contrary, a progressive work. Perfection, according to the common acceptation of that term, admits of a twofold signification. A creature is said to be perfect in its kind, when it possesses all these parts which are essential to the species, though they may not be yet grown to their full maturity. Thus a child is perfect when he possesses all the members essential to the human frame, in their due proportion, though he is only perfect as a man when these arrive, in course of time, at their full growth. In this respect every believer is perfect or complete; for no sooner is he renewed in the temper and dispositions of his mind, than the new creature, which is the workmanship of the Holy Spirit, exhibits in miniature all the features and lineaments of a perfect man in Christ Jesus. Hence it is called the *new man*, the *hidden man of the heart*, to denote how perfect and complete it is with respect to parts. In that change which the scripture designs a being born again, or the new birth, the soul is renewed in all its powers and faculties, propensions and

and affections, yet only in part, and hence, by a wise and gracious appointment, Christians, while here, still need and desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby. This hidden man of the heart, or gracious principle in believers, is subject, however, in the present state to manifold decays, through the occasional prevalence of an opposite principle. It is as necessarily dependant on the grace and Spirit of Christ for its growth and improvement, as for its original formation; for in this respect he is the Author and finisher of his people's faith. However various the graces and virtues which constitute the complex but amiable character of a Christian, yet are they all to be found, in their first principles, in every renewed heart, though some, owing to various circumstances, may appear more remarkably in the life than others. As the body is one, though it hath many members, so these, however various, form one complete whole.

Christ himself, in his glorified nature, as man and Mediator, is the perfect pattern, according to which all his people will be perfectly conformed in due time; and this conformity is already in part begun, and will be completed when that which is only in part shall be done away, and that which is perfect shall come. The believer is therefore complete in him as his pattern and exemplar, after which he will be gradually fashioned by the powerful agency of the Holy Ghost. The saints, beholding by faith the glory of their Lord as in a glass, are transformed into his divine image, from glory to glory, through the effectual operation of his Spirit.

But, besides the above, there is another sense in which they are complete in him, with respect to their

sanctification, which is, That he is possessed of an infinite fulness of grace, virtue, and energy, for carrying on this important and happy change in them against all opposition, till it is at length consummated in glory. We are accordingly informed in the preceding context, "That in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; that the whole fulness of the Godhead dwelleth in him bodily;" and elsewhere, that "it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." That his fulness as Mediator is here intended, and not that fulness which is peculiar to him as God, seems evident; for this he possesseth independent of the Father's will. It is essential to him as God, underived and incommunicable; whereas the other is an imparted and communicable fulness, and is proper to him as the living and animating Head of his mystical body the Church. Agreeably to this, the beloved Apostle, in his own, and in the name of all his fellow-saints, remarks, "And out of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace;" that is, in the most free and copious manner, or grace corresponding to the various graces he himself as man possesses; for as he became in all things like his brethren, sin excepted, by the assumption of their nature; so they become in all things like him, by the participation of his grace and Spirit. As in the human frame, the blood and animal spirits are conveyed, by means of certain vessels, from the head to the heart, and thence to all the parts of the body; so the sinner, naturally dead in trespasses and sins, being once vitally united to the Lord Jesus by faith, through the quickening power and effectual agency of the Spirit, constantly derives from him, through the same blessed medium, renewed supplies of

of grace, by which he is enabled to make daily progress in his Christian course, to advance from one degree of grace unto another, and grow in a gradual meetness for the complete enjoyment of God in the state of pure and perfect felicity above. It is only in virtue of these constant supplies that his path, like the morning light, shines with a growing brightness to the perfect day; for these suspended, he would soon stop short in his course, and find his own strength at best to be but extreme weakness, and the divine life, with all its motions, ready to become extinct in his soul. Thus Christ lives in his people, by his grace and Spirit, and they in him by the exercise of faith and love; and hence the life they live as Christians, in the flesh, is said to be by faith in the Son of God. Yea, it is not so much they that live and act in this new state, as Christ that lives and acts in them, by the power of his grace and the agency of his Spirit; whence he is formed there the hope of glory, and the efficient cause of their progressive meetness for it. This happy union, in its nature and consequences, is metaphorically described in scripture by that connexion which subsists betwixt the foundation and superstructure, the vine and its branches, the husband and wife, the head and the members—all denoting the most endearing relation to him, and intimate union and fellowship with him. This mysterious connexion, which subsists between Christ and all the members of his mystical body, with the precious fruits that result from it, and the manner of their conveyance, is, perhaps, meant to be represented in Zechariah's prophecy, under the apt similitude of a golden candlestick, with its bowl and seven lamps, which are fed by means of seven pipes from

two olive trees that stand on either side. He is that ever-green tree of whom all our fruit is found,—the Tree of Life, whose loaded boughs furnish food and healing to the nations, while its permanent greatness, spreading honours, and undecayed glory, beautify and adorn the Paradise of God. Himself tells us, “With-
“out me,” or, as it may be rendered, “separate
“from me ye can do nothing;” which does not
so much mean without his assistance, however true
that be, as without a vital union to him. Abide in
me, says he, and I in you. As the branch cannot
bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine; no
more can ye except ye abide in me. With propri-
ety are we therefore exhorted to be strong, not in the
strength of grace already received, much less in our
own strength, but only in the Lord, and in the power
of his might. — Which leads, in the *third* place, to
consider his people as complete in him, or in the aids
of his grace, for the faithful discharge of every duty.

III. Though the obedience of the real Christian
does not secure his title to eternal life, which is pe-
culiar to the righteousness of the Son of God, yet is
it indispensably necessary as his meetness for it, and
an evidence to himself and others of his right to it.
It is also necessary as an expression of his love and
gratitude to his divine Redeemer, for the edification
of others, and the glory of God: “Herein,” says our
Lord, “is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth
“much fruit, and so shall ye be;” that is, evidence
yourselves to be “my disciples.” The duties of the
Christian life are various and important, many of
them arduous and difficult, all above the utmost
exertions of our own strength to perform in an ac-
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ceptable manner. From daily experience we may learn to join in the Apostle's humble confession, "Of ourselves we cannot so much as think a good thought;" but, to our unspeakable comfort, may also add, with him, "Through Christ strengthening us we can do all things." The same eminent saint, viewing the many arduous services to which he was called, in his public capacity as a minister of the gospel, cries out, under a deep and humbling sense of his own weakness, "Who is sufficient for these things?" He, however, found, in his happy experience, and every Christian will find and be ready to acknowledge, that all his sufficiency is of God. He is a very present help in every time of need. His gracious promise, addressed to the apostle Paul on a certain emergency, is also intended for the comfort and encouragement of all his people, as their respective exigencies may require: "My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength is made perfect in weakness." The resolution the Apostle founds upon this promise, and the conclusion he draws from it is, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."—"Not by power, nor by might, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." Fear not, says he by his Prophet, for I am with thee; be not afraid, for I am thy God, I will strengthen thee, I will help thee, and uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Having these, and the like great and precious promises, as the ground and encouragement of our faith and hope; what duty so difficult, what service so arduous, but we may enter upon with cheerfulness, in firm reliance on the promised aids of that God who hath never left any of the seed of Jacob to seek his

face in vain? The duties which the Christian owes to God, himself, and his fellow-men, are various and diversified, according to the different stations, relations, and circumstances in which providence may place him in life; yet the supplies of that fulness of grace which dwells in Christ as Mediator, is sufficient for the faithful discharge of them all. That the true believer is complete in his divine Lord and Master, in this respect, were easy to illustrate and confirm, not only from the many promises made to this purpose in sacred writ, but also from the many remarkable instances recorded there of suitable and seasonable assistance liberally vouchsafed, by which persons, even such as were otherwise weak and timid, were enabled to perform the most glorious exploits in the face of the most imminent dangers; but this I wave, and proceed to consider the Christian as complete in his Saviour, or in the aids of his grace, for bearing, with patience, resignation, and fortitude, all the trials and afflictions to which he may be exposed in the present state.

IV. Should any one imagine, that by embracing the religion of Jesus he will obtain a total exemption from the common troubles, distresses, and calamities of life, which are the native fruits and consequence of sin, he will find himself miserably disappointed. The blessed Author of our holy religion assures all his followers, that it is through manifold tribulations they are to enter into his kingdom; and, agreeable to this, addresses them, Whosoever will be my disciple, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. In this respect, it is but just and reasonable that the members should be conformed to the

the Head, who, as the Captain of our salvation, was himself made perfect through sufferings; for the disciple is not greater than his Master, nor the servant than his Lord. Many have, therefore, counted it all joy when they fell, or were permitted in the providence of God to fall into divers temptations, or trials, and gloried in being counted worthy to suffer for the sake of Jesus, well knowing, that, being once tried by enduring these, they would in the end receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to all that love him, and, by a patient continuance in well-doing, wait for him. Though Christianity is pregnant with the most divine consolations, and presents to our faith the most delightful prospects in future, yet never did it pretend to exempt its votaries from the troubles and afflictions incident to humanity; but then it does what is far better, in affording sufficient strength and fortitude to bear them, in making them conducive to our best interests, and giving the near and certain prospect of a total and happy deliverance from them. Have not many, and perhaps some who now hear me, found reason, from their own experience, to join with the royal Psalmist, "It is good
"for me that I have been afflicted. Before I was
"afflicted I went astray, but now have I learned
"to keep the divine commandments." Flesh and blood recoil at the prospect of sufferings, and if possible, would evite the bitter cup; for, an Apostle teaches, and our Lord's example allows, that no affliction for the present is joyous but grievous, and as such, so far as may be consistent with duty, to be deprecated and avoided; yet, to reconcile our minds to our lot when adverse, we are told, that these produce the peaceable fruits of righteousness, in all who are right-
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ly exercised thereby. How encouraging the promise, "That all things shall work together for good to them that love God;" that their light and momentary afflictions shall work out for them a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory! and how much calculated to inspire peace, hope, and joy, under the greatest trials and tribulations of life! To each individual of his people does God in effect thus address himself, I will never, never leave thee, nor forsake thee; for thou art engraven upon the palms of my hands, as a seal upon my heart and upon my arm; thy walls are ever before me; and sooner shall a tender mother forget her sucking child, than I forget thee. This gracious presence of Jehovah, which is promised to be with his people in every situation and circumstance of life, supported Joseph under a long imprisonment in a foreign land; protected Daniel in the den from the fury of the lions; preserved the three children unhurt amidst the consuming flames; the prophet Jeremiah in the dungeon, while he sunk in the mire; and made Paul and Silas pass the watches of the night in praise, while their feet were made fast in the stocks, and the next day, for aught they knew, might prove their last. This gracious presence likewise effected their deliverance, and raised them superiour to the power and malice of all their enemies. Compared to this, what are all the succours of reason, all the boasted aids of philosophy! A person who believes he has help at hand, and acts in the presence of his friend, exerts himself beyond his abilities, and often performs wonders which are not to be matched by one who is not animated with the same confidence of success. A firm unshaken trust in the gracious presence and promised assistance of our Almighty

mighty Leader and Friend, who hath pledged his word to be ever present with his people to strengthen and support them, naturally produces patience, hope, cheerful submission to the Divine will, and all other dispositions of mind, which in a great measure alleviate the unavoidable evils and calamities of life. Confiding in God, he reaps the benefit of every divine attribute, and forgets and loses his own insufficiency in the fulness of infinite perfection. Thus is he raised above his own weakness, and becomes in a manner insensible of it, through the consideration that his helper is Almighty. Is not the real Christian then complete in Jesus, and in the aids of his grace, against all the evils of life, and, I may also add, against the fears of death, that last and most terrible of all enemies?

Death is an interesting event that awaits us all, and through fears of which many have been all their lifetime subject to bondage. There are many sins and human frailties which are incident to the best of men, and from which the most perfect character is not wholly exempt in the present state. These may indeed sit easy on the mind while health and strength are enjoyed, and, like the shadow, appear little in the meridian of life, yet increase in magnitude with our setting sun. Against these, however, faith in Jesus is a powerful antidote; for to those who are in him there is no condemnation from any quarter whatever. Even in the immediate view of this awful event, and of the solemn scenes which succeed it, he inspires the believing soul with that triumphant song, "O Death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

"Lord." When the Christian draws near the last moments of his separation from this frail mortal state, and stands as it were on the very verge of time; with eternity full in view; when he is just about to enter upon another state of existence, to converse with scenes, objects, and companions altogether new, the firm persuasion of his gracious and supporting presence in that critical hour, who first conferred existence upon him; hath already conducted through one stage of it; and stands engaged by promise never to leave or forsake him, is sufficient to fortify against all these fears, anxieties, and gloomy apprehensions, which would otherwise naturally arise in the human breast on that solemn occasion, to the terror and distraction of the departing soul. From all this, however, Christ sets the believer free, as by his own death he hath disarmed that formidable enemy of his fatal sting; and, from a king of terrors, converted him into a messenger of peace to all his people. Though the grave is to the wicked as a strong and deep dungeon, where they are reserved, as so many state prisoners, against the day of final retribution, and perdition of ungodly men; yet, to the righteous, in virtue of their Lord's descent to, and temporary residence in that dreary abode, it is become a bed of rest, where their precious remains enjoy undisturbed repose, till the voice of the archangel shall reanimate their sleeping ashes. They need not, therefore, be afraid to go down to this subterraneous dwelling; for he will assuredly be with them, and bring them up again to the full possession of immortal life. Faith's firm assurance of this made the royal Prophet sing, in the view of his departure hence, "Yea, though I walk
"through the valley of the shadow of death, I will
"fear

“fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” The thought of appearing at the bar of universal judgment need not alarm the genuine Christian; for he may anticipate the solemn scenes and interesting consequences of that important event with much the same temper that a bridegroom anticipates his nuptial festivity, or a prince the solemnities of his coronation day. In the person of the august Judge, he may recognize his best Friend, his elder Brother, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, who, amidst all the glory, pomp, and magnificence of his appearance, will not be ashamed to own the poorest Christian as his brother, and co-heir with him of eternal life.

I might once more observe, That real Christians are complete in the ever-blessed Jesus, because powerfully assisted by him against all the assaults of their spiritual enemies; but this, with the improvement of the whole, shall form the subject of another discourse.

Mean-while, convinced of the importance of their privilege, who are so in all the foregoing respects, let us give all diligence to make it sure to ourselves. Is the pardon of sin, peace, and reconciliation with God, conformity to him in holy tempers and dispositions, and the continued supplies of his grace and Spirit, fitting us for the proper discharge of every duty, and the patient bearing of every trial and affliction; is all this conducive to our Christian comfort, during our journey through this wilderness, and necessary to a well-founded hope of happiness in the Canaan of rest and bliss beyond it? Without an interest in these, must we remain utter strangers to the highest perfection

tion and felicity of which our nature is capable, and that not only in time but for ever? With what weight then does the exhortation of the prophet, with the encouraging motive by which it is enforced, come home to all of us who have hitherto neglected the great salvation? "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Having such great and precious promises, such powerful and encouraging motives to invigorate our applications for mercy to pardon, and grace to help; and to animate our hope of obtaining them; let us, Jacob-like, wrestle for the blessing, till the great Hearer of Prayer make his righteousness shine forth in our view as brightness, and his salvation as a lamp that burneth: for on that generation who seek the face of Jacob's God with their whole heart will he command the blessing out of Zion, even life for evermore, with all its precious prerequisites. These may we now possess and enjoy, and in due time obtain an abundant enterance into that life, through Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

DISCOURSE XI.

GENUINE BELIEVERS COMPLETE IN CHRIST.

Coloss. ii. 10.

Ye are complete in him.

THREE happy they who are in such a case! Now are they indeed possessed of a rich treasure, of a pearl of great price; yet have unspeakably more in certain prospect. Though it should be their lot to be poor and despised in the world, yet are they rich in faith, and heirs of a boundless kingdom and immortal crown; yea, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus, the Son of his essence. Hence may they sing, even in the worst situations, with an inspired Prophet, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places." Or, should the Christian be rich and honourable among men; for though not many, yet some of that description are chosen and called; he hath, however, more durable riches and honours reserved for him

beyond this precarious state, with which those of the world cannot once compare. All the enjoyments of this life can never fill the vast capacities of an immortal soul; nor can the man who possesses these in the most abundant measure be complete in them, or derive real happiness from them. God alone can prove our all-sufficient and soul-satisfying portion; and hence the Psalmist expresses himself, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee:"—"the Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup;" and to the same purpose adds an eminent Prophet, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him." Can that man be poor and unhappy who can call this portion his?—be joyless, destitute, and forlorn, who has an actual interest in it, and enjoys the pleasing sense of it? While the way of transgressors is hard, and, like the evening twilight, issues apace in the shades of darkest night, to him Wisdom's ways shall prove ways of pleasantness and all her paths peace, while his foot-steps and progress in them resemble the morning light, which shines with a brightness gradually increasing to the perfect day. Who would not then pray, Lord make me complete in Jesus, thy Son, and so cause me to inherit and enjoy all the inestimable blessings which flow from an interest in him; and then let the world unenvied share the best things its greatest favourites and votaries can boast.

Having considered the real Christian as complete in his Saviour for the important purposes of justification,—of progressive sanctification,—as complete in him for the continued supplies of his grace and Spirit, fitting for the proper discharge of every duty,

ty,—and for bearing with patience, resignation, fortitude, and comfort, the various trials to which he may be exposed in life, it now remains I should once more view him, in the *fifth* and last place, as complete in his redeeming Lord, because powerfully assisted by him against all the assaults of his spiritual enemies.

V. The principal of these are, the Devil, the World, and the Flesh, or the inherent corruption of our nature—all which exert their united influence against the Christian, and have a powerful tendency to pervert his practice, and disturb his peace and tranquillity. The two latter are the grand auxiliaries by means of which Satan maintains his conquests over the children of men, and promotes the infernal purposes of his kingdom.

1. That there are certain malignant spirits who have revolted from God, their rightful Lord and Sovereign, and set up for themselves a kind of monarchy in opposition to God and goodness, at the head of which Satan, the god of this world and prince of the spirit that now works and rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience, presides, is abundantly evident both from scripture and experience, however much some may affect to disbelieve it. The former assures us, that it is his constant practice, in conjunction with his malicious emissaries, as the avowed enemy of God and man, to go about seeking whom he may devour; and an inspired writer tells us, in his own, and in the name of all his fellow Christians, “We are not ignorant of his devices.” By his long and continued practice in this diabolical art, he has acquired much skill and dexterity; and is consequently more

than match for the wisest of the human race. His situation, the manner of his operation and assault, together with his long experience and vast sagacity, as a spirit of a superiour order, render him a very formidable and dangerous enemy. Add to all this, how very ready we are to fall in with his temptations and wicked suggestions, through the innate depravity of our nature, and we will at once see how very unfit we are to enter into such unequal combat in our own strength. But, though we are quite unable to cope with this powerful and subtile adversary, independent of foreign aid, yet through the supplies of the grace and Spirit of Jesus, we may not only enter the field with courage, but also maintain our ground, repel the foe, and come off at length with victory and triumph. It is indeed true, that in the Christian-warfare we are called to wrestle, not merely with flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places; yet, if among the genuine friends and followers of the Prince of Peace, in and through him we are completely equipped for the arduous and otherwise unequal conflict, as may be seen by consulting the sixth chapter of Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, from the 10th verse downwards. In this case greater and mightier is he who is with us and on our side, even the Lord of hosts mighty in battle, than all they that can be against us; and with propriety, therefore, does the Apostle there introduce himself, "Brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might;" and elsewhere add, "Acquit yourselves like men, and be strong." Let us rejoice and assume courage when we reflect that the foe we are called to encounter

counter hath been already vanquished, by our Almighty Leader, the glorious Captain of our salvation, and that upon his own ground, with every possible advantage on his side; rejoice that he is so entirely under his controul, as not to be able to touch one single hair of our head without his permission. Our blessed Lord, in submitting to death as an atoning sacrifice for his people, overcame both death and him that had the power of it, even the Devil; and, in demonstration of his complete victory over both on the cross, made a shew of them openly at his resurrection, in the view of God, angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, thus leading captivity captive when he ascended to his native heaven. In his attempt to bruise the heel of Christ's humanity, our Lord effectually crushed the head of the old serpent, and gave such a fatal blow to his interests as will never be recovered. Thus may we consider his cross as the triumphal car at which he dragged these haughty foes, making that the very instrument of his triumph which they probably thought would prove the mean of disconcerting for ever God's designs of mercy towards our guilty race. All this he did in a public character, as the head and representative of his whole mystical body the Church; for the glorious victory, big with such interesting consequences, he once won in person on the cross, is he still prosecuting in and by his people; and his own complete conquest over all their combined enemies is a sure pledge and earnest of theirs in due time. While, under the conduct of Joshua, that brave and successful leader, Israel of old fought with Amalek in the valley, Moses stood on an adjacent hill with the rod of God in his hand, which, while he held up to heaven the chosen tribes

prevailed. In this, as in many other things, he was an eminent type of Christ, especially as our prevailing Intercessor on high; for while his people are called to combat with their spiritual enemies in this lower valley, from the mount of God, where he hath fixed his seat, his eye is ever upon them; his arm stretched out for their protection and defence; and he never fails to plead their cause. To animate their hopes, and invigorate their exertions, he assures them, that, as the God of Peace, he will shortly bruise Satan, and with him all that abet his cause, under their feet, and thus make them conquerors, yea, and more than conquerors through his love. Say, then, are they not in this respect complete in him?

2. However malicious, subtle, and assiduous Satan may be in his attempts upon us; yet is he not half so dangerous an enemy as our own hearts, of which God testifies, "That they are above all things deceitful, and desperately wicked." It is this that gives Satan his chief advantage against us; for, by reason hereof, none of us can say, with our Lord upon a certain occasion, "The prince of this world cometh, but hath nothing in me." This is an enemy ever in our own bosom, from which we can no where fly; and hence is the more dangerous, as we are less aware of its snares, less apt to suspect its treachery, and consequently more negligent and remiss in using proper and timely precaution against it. Our situation, in this respect, exactly resembles that of a city closely besieged by a formidable enemy, while within there are a number of malcontents who are ready to embrace every opportunity of setting open the gates for their admission, and all this under the specious pretext of friendship. This evil heart of unbelief, in
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its natural tendency, leads astray from the living God, is full of enmity against him, and in all its workings and propensities counteracts his holy law, to which it can never be brought into subjection. In the real Christian this principle indeed no longer retains its native power and influence; for of this it is divested by the communication of the grace and Spirit of God, by whose aid he is enabled to maintain a constant warfare against it; yet does it still continue to vex and annoy him, and will to the close of life. In this respect, agreeable to the promise, and in virtue of the grace of Christ, "Sin shall not have dominion over him;" yet many a deep sigh does it occasion him, and frequent struggle to gain the mastery over it. The great Apostle of the Gentiles, in the seventh chapter of his epistle to the Romans, gives a full and particular account of the manner of its working, and how much he himself felt its power and suffered under its galling yoke. He frequently groaned, as being burdened by its intolerable pressure, so that though his will was powerfully inclined to that which is good, yet, upon many occasions, how to perform it he found not. It extorted from him that pathetic exclamation, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The believer, when without are fightings and within are fears, when he is assaulted by his spiritual enemies, groans under the load of trials and afflictions, or is made to feel the harassing power of indwelling sin; on such trying occasions, is he brought to address the God of his life, in the words of good king Jehoshaphat, "O my God, wilt thou not judge them? for I have no might against this great company that cometh against me, neither know I what to do; but mine eyes

"eyes are upon thee:" And with pious Aſa, in a ſimilar caſe, "Lord it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power; help me, O my God, for I reſt on thee, and in thy name go forth againſt this multitude." In this view the Chriſtian is complete in his Lord, as we ſee from Paul's grateful aſcription, in connexion with the above exclamation, "I thank God, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord;" namely, for deliverance from this body of ſin and death; or, as ſome copies read it, The grace of God, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, which is the answer of faith to the deſponding queſtion he had a little before put; and is as much as to ſay, that divine grace which dwells in Chriſt, and flows to men through him, ſhall eaſe me of this grievous burden, and completely effect my relief in due time.

3. The world, though the laſt of theſe enemies I mention, againſt whole influence the genuine Chriſtian is complete in Jeſus, is not, however, the leaſt. By the preſent conſtitution of our nature, and mode of our ſubſiſtence, we are ſo much converſant with ſenſible objects, ſo much connected with material things, and have ſo neceſſary a dependance on outward enjoyments, that it is no ſmall or common attainment to riſe above the love of a preſent world. This, notwithſtanding, muſt be attained by every, even the weakeſt of the followers of Jeſus; for ſo incompatible is this principle, however prevalent and little thought of, with the love of God, that an inſpired writer expreſſely aſſures us both cannot dwell together in the ſame heart: "Ye cannot, ſays Jeſus, ſerve God and mammon." If we love the world, or the things of the world; that is, in a ſupreme and prevailing

prevailing degree, suffering its cares, pleasures, honours, profits and pursuits, to engross our time and affections, the love of the Father is not in us, howsoever we may fondly persuade ourselves of the contrary. An immoderate attachment to these is the more ensnaring and dangerous, as men generally deem this at least innocent, if not meritorious; and hence do they, alas! in greater numbers, sacrifice their most important concerns at the shrine of this mean deity, which daily slays its thousands and ten thousands. We are all but too apt to imbibe the maxims and imitate the customs of a present world, without duly weighing their propriety, or adverting to their native consequences. Would we see this enchantress divested of all her fatally alluring charms and imaginary importance to real happiness, let us view her in the faithful mirror of God's word, and in the realizing light of eternity, and she will appear an airy phantom, lighter than very vanity, more transient than the fleeting shadow. That faith which is the evidence of things not seen, and imparts, even here, substance and reality to things looked for, in some measure corresponding to that of which they are in truth possessed, serves also to strip the world of that fair disguise, and these gay colourings which so fatally impose upon many. This is the victory that overcometh the world, saith an Apostle, even our faith. Under the influence of this divine principle the Christian is enabled to endure as seeing him who is invisible, to act as under the powers of the world to come; and, with Moses, to have a respect to that glorious recompence of reward which is reserved in heaven for all that now seek and look for it by a patient continuance in well-doing. The

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men of the world, who set their heart upon it, and seek their portion in it, may now employ their utmost malice and cunning to defame his character and embitter his comforts; for to the end of time will the seed of the serpent hate and persecute the seed of the Woman; yet, committing himself to that God who judgeth righteously, he will protect from the power of the wicked, and cause their malice cease. Why should those, whose constant guardian and protector is the Creator of the ends of the earth, be afraid of man who is a worm, and of the Son of man who is dust? Perhaps at the very time he thinks himself most secure, or is forming the deepest schemes for aggrandizing himself or distressing the followers of the Lamb, his breath may depart, he return to his dust, and that same day his thoughts perish. Soon will Jesus address all his afflicted, persecuted people, with regard to every present foe and evil, These your enemies, that ye have so lately seen and felt to your sorrow and distress, you shall see no more for ever. Mean-while let them put on the whole armour of God, that they may be able to stand in the evil day, and, for this purpose, receive and rely on the Redeemer daily, as made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. We are not straitened in him, but in our own bowels; for he is all-sufficient to help, and work in us all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power. Such as put their trust in him, and commit their souls unto him, will he infallibly keep by his almighty power through faith unto salvation.

Thus have I shewn in what respects the truly godly may be said to be complete in the Son of God, to all which let me now subjoin some improvement.

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VI. From what hath been suggested, it is easy to see that such alone can share solid peace and comfort here, and are in the sure way of being happy for ever. The great question then is, have we good reason to hope that such is our own case—that we are complete in Jesus in the foregoing views? However various the distinctions which take place among men, or the modifications of human characters, in the sight and estimation of God, by whose verdict our final state and condition will be one day unalterably fixed, they may be all reduced into two great classes,—the Righteous and the Wicked; or, agreeable to our text, those who are complete in the Saviour and those who as yet have no interest in him. To one or other of these each of us belongeth, and a short time will finally determine which. As a mistake here, if not speedily rectified, must prove fatal beyond all possibility of redress, we cannot too soon or anxiously enquire into our real state and character before God, and future prospects as connected herewith. We are to judge of the safety of our state, and the sincerity of our religious profession, by the influence of our faith in regulating our temper and conduct; for every tree is known by its fruit, and that faith which does not purify the heart and work by love to God and holiness, is unavailing to salvation. Are we freely justified from the guilt of sin, and in a state of peace and favour with God? then will we be careful in all things to please him, and to avoid whatever is of a contrary tendency. That grace of God which bringeth salvation not only from the guilt, but also from the power and dominion of sin, teacheth, and effectually constraineth to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously,

teously, and godly, studying to walk in all his commandments and ordinances blameless, and maintain a conscience void of offence both towards him and all men. Every pretence to that grace, and hope of the salvation which it reveals and brings, must be vain and groundless, if such are not their native fruit and influence; for otherwise we are yet in our sins—under their guilt and power, and liable to all that future wrath to which they so justly expose.

1. But have you who now hear me just reason to hope better things of yourselves, even things that accompany salvation, upon impartially comparing your frame, temper, and deportment in life with the word of God, and the character of his children as there delineated? Does your faith work by love, and purify the heart? and are you as anxious to be made holy as happy? to be delivered from the power as from the guilt of sin? and to obtain a meetness for heaven as to escape the misery of hell? Is Jesus, the compassionate Saviour of sinners, all in all to you,—precious in his person, righteousness, offices, and relations? and do the advancement of his glory, and the enjoyment of him, constitute the great and leading motives of your conduct? Can you lay claim to this as expressive of the real sentiments of your heart, and prevailing tenor of your lives? If this is really the case, you may indulge the pleasing hope, without fear of presumption or disappointment, that you are of the happy number who are complete in the Lord, in all the views given of that privilege.—From what you have now heard it is easy to infer the safety and happiness of your present condition, and the exceeding great and glorious prospects which stand inseparably connected with it in the world to come.

come. Is the pardon of sin an important and necessary blessing? so very necessary, that we must be for ever miserable and undone without it? Of this blessing you are made partakers through faith in Christ Jesus; for hereby the guilt of all your sins, that immense debt you owe divine justice, is remitted, and will never rise up against you to your condemnation: "There is therefore now," saith the Apostle, "no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus;" for who can condemn whom the Lord justifies? or destroy whom he decrees to save? The justice of God, no less than his mercy, is on your side; for he is just, and manifests himself to be so, even in justifying the ungodly who believe on his beloved Son, in whom, and for whose sake, they are accepted. By the imparted knowledge of himself, shall he justify the many whose iniquities he bore; and being justified in his name, as the Lord their Righteousness, in him shall they glory and make their boast. Though the value and importance of this privilege do not now appear, and many give themselves little or no concern to obtain an interest in it, yet the period is hastening on, when even those who now despise it would give the world, if at their disposal, to call it theirs. When you who now weep for sin, and implore its pardon for the sake of the Prince exalted to give repentance and the remission of it, shall be publicly acquitted at his solemn bar, all such as now neglect, or despise this exercise, shall look on him whom they had pierced, and mourn, shall be made to weep and wail because of him.

Is deliverance from the reigning power and galling yoke of sin, and a growing conformity to the ever-blessed Jesus in holy tempers and dispositions,

necessary to human happiness? Of this too are you made sharers by the renewing agency of the Spirit, and the transforming efficacy of divine grace, by which you become more excellent than your unregenerate neighbours, even the excellent ones of the earth in whom God Most High himself delighteth. He hath pledged his promise, that sin shall not have dominion over those who believe, and are the subjects of his grace. As you are distinguished by this grace, be careful to distinguish yourselves by the exemplary holiness of your deportment. Study to shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of the darkness and guilt of a natural state into the marvellous light of his gospel, by the faithful discharge of the various duties of life, by the pious and stated observance of all the means of grace, and by the exercise of Christian dispositions under the trials and afflictions with which God may see meet to exercise you. Insufficient as you are for this in yourselves, in Jesus you have an all-sufficiency, abundant grace to help in every time of need; through the liberal supplies of which you may so bear and perform the will of God as that he shall be glorified, others edified, and your own best interests promoted. With what propriety are you then exhorted to be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might; to devolve all your cares and burdens upon him, fully persuaded that he careth for you; and to acquit yourselves like men and be strong? "My God," saith an Apostle, "shall supply all your need,"—whether respecting soul or body, time or eternity, and that not in scanty supplies, but "according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ." How extensive the grant! how boundless the measure! What could we wish,

or conceive more! Under the conduct, and through the love of your mighty Leader, shall you be made more than conquerors over every enemy; for these will he shortly bruise under your feet. Over death, the last of these that keeps the field, your victory shall be complete; and the grave, that land of darkness and oblivion, will one day be forced to restore your remains in full possession of a never-dying life. Jesus, who once came to expiate your guilt, and for whose second coming you now look, in the exercise of faith and patience, will assuredly come again to your complete salvation. Neither the first nor second death can hurt you, for over you they shall have no power; and from the dominion of the silent tomb will he redeem you; himself proving death's plague and the grave's destruction when repentance shall be hid from his eyes. Before an assembled world will he own you as his brethren, and adjudge you to the actual possession of eternal life. He will never cease to do you good, till he hath brought you home to his God and Father's house, and, through him, your's in the same endearing and important relations, and there will he prove your all in all for ever. Being thus complete in the Lord for all the purposes of holiness and happiness, study to entertain a grateful sense of his love and goodness, and daily manifest it by all the corresponding expressions of obedience, thanksgiving, and praise, deeming nothing too great to do or suffer for one who hath done and suffered so much for you. Upon the slightest survey of your felicity, can we forbear exclaiming, "Happy is that people that is in such a case: yea happy is that people, whose God is the Lord *!"

* Psal. cxliv. 15.

2. But will the utmost extent of charity permit us to suppose that all, or even the greater part of those who hear the gospel are of that happy description? Does not our Lord, when describing the entrance on a life of faith and holiness, and perseverance in it, under the notion of a strait gate and narrow way, add, and few there be that find it*? At the same time he tells us, that there be many who go in at the wide gate, and walk in the broad way that leadeth to destruction; both which solemn declarations are, alas! verified in every age, and in every country to which the gospel comes. Admitting the verdict of Jesus, the infallible Judge of men and characters, with which universal experience and observation perfectly accord, is there not too much reason to fear, that not a few within these walls are yet destitute of an interest in the important privilege in the text, and, of consequence, in the gall of bitterness and under the bonds of iniquity? The word of God abounds with the most awful and pointed descriptions of the extreme guilt and danger of their present state, and the magnitude of that future misery which stands connected with it. We need not travel over the whole volume of inspiration, in order to select a few of these, for a single chapter or two will furnish a great variety, which highly merit our deep regard; and announce a solemn warning in the ears of sinners: In what emphatic, yet truly alarming language does Bildad the Shuhite describe the state and prospects of such, be their outward condition in life ever so prosperous! "The light of the wicked shall be put out, and the spark of his fire shall not shine. The

* Math. vii. 13. 14.

"light shall be dark in his tabernacle, and his lamp
 "shall be put out with him. His own counsel shall
 "cast him down: for he is cast into a net by his own
 "feet, and he walketh upon a snare. Terrors shall
 "make him afraid on every hand, and destruction
 "shall be ready at his side. It shall devour the strength
 "and beauty of his skin: the first-born of death shall
 "devour his strength. His confidence shall be root-
 "ed out of his tabernacle, and it shall bring him to
 "the king of terrors. His roots shall be dried up be-
 "neath, and above shall his branch be cut off. His
 "remembrance shall perish from the earth, and he
 "shall have no name in the street. He shall be dri-
 "ven from light into darkness, and chased out of the
 "world. They that come after him shall be astonish-
 "ed at his day, as they that lived with him were af-
 "frighted. Surely such are the dwellings and pro-
 "spects of the wicked, and this is the place and por-
 "tion of him that knoweth not God." By figures
 still more striking and expressive, if possible, does Zo-
 phar, another of Job's friends, represent the unhappy
 state and fearful portion of the ungodly: "Knowest
 "thou not this of old, since man was placed upon the
 "earth, That the triumph of the wicked is short, and
 "the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment? Though
 "his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his
 "head reach unto the clouds: yet he shall perish for-
 "ever: they who have seen him shall say, Where is
 "he? He shall flee away as a dream, and shall not be
 "found: yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of
 "the night. The eye also which saw him shall see
 "him no more; neither shall his place any more be-

* Job xviii.

G g 3.

"hold

"hold him. His bones are full of the sins of his
 "youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust.
 "Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, though
 "he hide it under his tongue; though he spare it,
 "and forsake it not; but keep it still within his mouth:
 "yet is it the gall of asps within him. He hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again: God shall cast them out of his belly. He shall suck the poison of asps: the viper's tongue shall slay him. That which he laboured for shall he restore, and shall not rejoice therein. Surely he shall not feel quietness in his belly," that is, his conscience, "he shall not save of that which he desired. In the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits: when he is about to fill his belly, God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him, and shall rain it upon him while he is eating. He shall flee from the iron weapon, and the bow of steel shall strike him through: terrors are upon him. A fire not blown shall consume him; it shall go ill with him that is left in his tabernacle. The heaven shall reveal his iniquity, and the earth shall rise up against him. The increase of his house shall depart, shall flow away in the day of his wrath. This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed unto him by God*." — These sentiments, and the language which conveys them, are too sublime and expressive to need or admit a comment. In them the artillery of heaven is levelled against the workers of iniquity; and obdurate is that heart indeed on which they make no impression. Already have they been verified in the sad ex-

* Job xx.

perience

perience of multitudes of that description, and all of them will one day feel and be convinced that they are not words of course. In the writings of the Prophets we find many things addressed to sinners equally awful and pointed, and, in this respect, our Lord, his Harbinger, and Apostles, come by no means short of them. Does not all this plainly shew the mistaken views of those who cannot, in their wisdom, endure such solemn warnings, and plain serious exhortations, when urged in their proper place? Could these mistake their message? or do they now cease to be examples for our imitation? Is there not as much reason now as in their day to address the hearers of the gospel, as composed of mixed characters? and, should we accost them all as saints, do we not act in direct opposition to the example of Jesus, his Prophets and Apostles? We are to beseech and persuade men, not only by the tender mercies, but also by the terrors of the Lord, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear. Should any of you who now hear me, Galio-like, care for none of these things; yet of this rest assured, that you will soon find them to be awful realities. While, my fellow-sinners, you refuse to accept of the Son of God in his saving characters, who can describe your spiritual condition, or conceive what you have every reason to fear in future? We dare not, on pain of God's highest displeasure, entertain you with such smooth things as tend to lull you fast asleep in security, or sooth the false hopes you may have hitherto entertained. So long as you can lay no claim to the distinguishing marks and characteristics of God's children which are recorded in scripture, be not deceived, you are still under the guilt of all your past transgressions, which

which have been ever accumulating from the first dawn of reason until now; for it is Christ's express declaration, "He that believeth not is condemned already:"—"he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him*." Is this a light matter, which merits no serious regard, to lie under an accumulated load of guilt and an immense treasure of penal wrath, which only waits a commission to hurry you away to these abodes where mercy shall no more invite, where God will for ever cease to be favourable, and where inflexible justice will still inflict deserved punishment with an impartial hand? Did not the god of this world blind your eyes by his seductions, and the fatal power of sin and unbelief in your own hearts, which abet his infernal conquests, it would be impossible for you to remain secure in this condition, and partake of the fleeting pleasures of sin and sense.

Is it a matter of small consequence to continue in a state of servitude to sin and Satan, the most despotic and pernicious of all tyrants, in danger every moment of being driven away, under their power and galling yoke, to that state where the blood of Jesus, and the grace of the Spirit shall for ever prove a spring shut up, a fountain sealed? Instead of possessing a growing conformity to the Son of God, in holy tempers and dispositions, the stains of sin and the features and lineaments of the prince of darkness are deeply engraven on your very souls, and that grace you reject alone can efface them—that blood of the covenant you count an unholy thing alone can wash them away. If he that despised Moses' law died

* John iii. 18. 36.

without mercy, under two or three witnesses, of how much sorer punishment suppose ye shall such be thought worthy, who can tread under foot the Son of God, count the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and do despite to the Spirit of grace * 1. You know who hath said, "Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompence," saith the Lord." Is it not then a fearful thing for impenitent sinners to fall into the hands of the living God, with whom is terrible majesty? for though hand join in hand such shall not escape unpunished.

Without an interest in Jesus you cannot be complete for the discharge of any duty, and as little for bearing with comfort any trial that may await you in life; and that fulness of power, grace, and efficacy, which render him mighty to save all that put their trust in and obey him, but make him equally mighty to punish all who refuse subjection to him. How can you hope to enter the dark and dreary vale, which lies betwixt this world and the next, with fortitude and safety, if the Saviour of souls stand not by you, as your Friend and Shepherd, to sustain and comfort you with his staff, and direct you by his rod,—is not with you, to administer an abundant entrance into his heavenly kingdom and glory? Are you prepared to encounter death as the king of terrors?—prepared to plead your cause and defend your conduct before the enlightened tribunal of the universal Judge? At these solemn periods, what would you give for victory over the last enemy, Death?—for an interest in God as a Father, and in Jesus, the Judge of all, as your Saviour? These events are absolutely certain in their approach; for it

* Heb. x.

is appointed for men once to die, and after this the judgment, and may be nigher us than we are aware: "Our days on earth are as a shadow and there is none abiding." Death, the prelude to judgment, often comes as a thief in the night, suddenly, when men look not for it, and are perhaps least prepared for its reception. The pardon of sin, peace and reconciliation with God, and good hope through grace, these important and necessary blessings, may now be obtained; for Jesus is exhibited in the gospel, as the object of our faith and hope, for this very purpose. Now is the day of God's patience and merciful visitation, in which he waits on sinners to be gracious. The Lord Redeemer, their compassionate Friend, now invites even the most unworthy—the very chief of sinners, and vilest of the vile, to come and be washed, sanctified, and justified in his name, and by his Spirit. He authorises his servants to beseech them, in his stead, to be reconciled to God, and to compel them, by gospel arguments and motives, to come in, that his house may be full: "Unto you," says he, "O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men!"—"Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted that are far from righteousness: behold, I bring my righteousness near unto you, and my salvation shall not tarry."—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in and sup with him and he with me."—"Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out;"—"and whosoever will may come and take the water of life freely."—

• 1 Chron. xxix. 15.

As he freely invites all, without exception, to whom his gospel comes, and enforces these invitations by the most gracious and unlimited promises; so we find him complaining when these are not cordially embraced, or produce not their desired effect, "Ye will not,"—that is, ye are unwilling to "come to me, that ye may have life."—"How often would I have gathered you, as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, but ye would not!"—"O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you!"—Are not these the words of Jesus, the compassionate Friend and Saviour of sinners? Can you then remain unwilling to hear his voice, and be indebted to him for complete salvation? Does he deign to stand at the door knocking for access, and promising to entertain those who admit him with the richest blessings; and are you still indisposed to hear his voice and open to him? or rather, are you not ready to cry, Come, O thou blessed of the Lord, and let not my former sins and unbelief provoke thee to stand longer without? Let every motive weigh with you to hear his voice, and to accept of him as the unspeakable gift of God to eternal life; and then will he acquit you from guilt and condemnation, sanctify you by his grace and Spirit, fit for doing and bearing the will of God, fortify against the fears of death, and, in the day of final decision, own you before an assembled world, and adjudge you to the possession of glory, honour, and immortality. You too shall be complete in him for all the purposes of salvation, and blessed by him in time and through eternity. But if you hearken not, nor lay it to heart, to give glory to God, you shall, to use the expressive language of inspiration, be as an oak whose

whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water; yea, like the chaff which the wind driveth away; for in a little the breath of God's displeasure will toss you from your dwellings and possessions on earth—your bodies to the devouring grave, and your souls to the depths of hell, whither all the barren trees from God's vineyard shall be gathered together to be burned with a fire that cannot be quenched. Hear the words of Moses to ancient Israel, on a solemn occasion, and apply them to your own case: "I call
" heaven and earth to record this day against you,
" that I have set before you life and death: therefore
" choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:
" that thou mayest love the Lord thy God, obey his
" voice, and cleave unto him; for he is thy life, and
" the length of thy days *." If you are so wise as to make this choice, you shall be wise for yourselves; but if you scorn and reject this counsel, you alone shall bear it—and heaven and earth will at a future day give in their evidence that you chose death.—May the Lord now work in you all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power, that being complete in all respects in Jesus, you may escape the wrath to come, and inherit a blessing. *Amen.*

* Deut. xxx. 19. 20.

DISCOURSE XII.

OUR LORD'S GRAVE A SOURCE OF COMFORT.

PREACHED BEFORE THE CELEBRATION OF THE HOLY ORDINANCE OF THE SUPPER.

MATTH. XXVIII. 5. 6.

And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said: come, see the place where the Lord lay—COME, SEE THE PLACE WHERE THE LORD LAY.

THE preceding chapter presents a scene the most solemn, wonderful, and interesting that ever was exhibited under the sun. Compared therewith, all that is great in the annals of states and empires sinks into littleness and nothing. Though the illustrious personage, the history of whose sufferings and death is here recorded, derives his origin from heaven, possesses in and of himself unlimited perfection, and claims absolute dominion over the universe, yet, amazing truth, he bows his head and expires! In his lowest debasement, he thought it no robbery to claim equality with God; and the mighty works he performed sufficiently evince the justice of the claim; while the signal displays of almighty power, exhibi-

ted before and at his death, bore ample attestation to his divine mission and supreme Deity. It was love to the sons of men—a love the most free and generous, matchless and inexpressible, which brought him from his celestial throne to the manger and the cross; for he suffered and died, the just One for the unjust, that he might bring them near to God, make them sharers of his grace here, and in due time completely blessed in the full and never-ceasing enjoyment of him in his immediate and glorious presence. Was he despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief? he who gave him that character directs to the procuring cause: “Surely he hath born our griefs and carried ‘our sorrows *.’” When he was numbered with the transgressors, stood in the room of the guilty, and bare the sins of many, divine justice, awfully incensed by human guilt, did not spare him: for the Church is taught to say, “He was wounded for our ‘transgressions, bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with ‘his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have ‘gone astray; we have turned every one to his own ‘way: and the Lord hath laid (or caused to meet, ‘as some render it) on him the iniquity of us all.” When his soul was made an offering for sin, and poured out unto death, we are told, “It pleased the ‘Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief;” and himself assigns the reason, “For the transgression of my people was he stricken.” Is it possible for language to express in more explicit and unequivocal terms, the vicarious nature of the sufferings of

* Isa. liii. 4.

the Son of God, and the important blessings which result from them to his people? Of such as would wrest from us this ground of consolation, and persuade us to seek peace and safety in refuges of lies, we may justly say, as the Apostle did of the unbelieving Jews, "They please not God, and are contrary to all men,"—to the whole household of faith. The gates of hell, the power, malice, and subtle devices of Satan, may threaten and assault, yet shall never prevail against the Church; for it is founded on an impregnable rock.

Under the pressure of Jehovah's arm, while our Lord trode in the wine-press of his wrath, he felt and bore what would have plunged the whole race of men in endless woe. When the sword of incensed justice, in the expressive language of scripture, awoke and smote the man who is God's fellow, nothing short of almighty power could inflict or sustain the blow. Well might he then adopt the pathetic exclamation of the Church, as receiving its full completion in himself, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?" "behold, and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger. From above hath he sent fire into my bones, and it prevaieth against them: he hath spread a net for my feet, he hath turned me back; he hath made me desolate, and faint all the day *." Surprising indeed though it be, to see the Son of God nailed to and expire on a cross betwixt two thieves, as if he were a greater malefactor than either; yet must he descend one step lower, and make his bed

* Lam. i. 12. 13.

for a time in the dust of death ! His transient visit to this place of skulls, this dreary pit of corruption, seemed at once to dash the hopes and prospects of his few friends and followers, and to afford his enemies a lasting triumph : " He was poured out like water ; " his heart melted like wax in the midst of his bow- " els. " — " His strength was dried up like a potsherd, " his tongue clave to his jaws, and he was brought " into the dust of death. " How awfully intolerable that ponderous load which pressed him down into death's gloomy mansion ! There he lay, however, not as an exhausted and hopeless captive, but as a mighty conqueror in a transient slumber ; for soon, like Samson, his type, in another case, did he pull down the strong gates of this city of destruction, break the fatal bonds of death, and burst asunder the barriers of the tomb, thus proving death's plague, and the grave's overthrow. These combined enemies which he had vanquished on the cross, he still held captive, though himself a breathless corpse, sealed and guarded in the tomb, till the fixed moment came ; and then he rose, by his own inherent might, to triumph over them in the full view of numerous spectators. Their precautions, politic as they were, served only to increase and divulge their own shame and confusion, and to display the triumphs of the royal prisoner to greater advantage ; for as his enemies cannot be supposed to accede to the plot against which they were cautiously guarding ; so his friends, suppose them ever so willing, were hereby effectually prevented. A little before, this glorious Sun of Righteousness, whose beams alone can enlighten a benighted world, appeared all over in a bloody eclipse ; but soon he emerges, to set no more, from under e-
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very black and gloomy cloud, and from these lower regions, so unworthy of his personal presence, ascends, with more than meridian effulgence, into the third heavens. So says the angel, who announced the joyful tidings to the pious women, "He is not here; for he is risen, as he said: Come, see the place where the Lord lay." This messenger from the celestial world, appeared on this occasion vested with a majesty and splendour becoming a minister of the Divine presence, one of these first-born sons of light, that excel in glory, wisdom, and strength. His countenance, says the Evangelist, was like lightening,—exceeding bright, penetrating and luminous; and his raiment, through the refulgent beams of light which issued from him, appeared white as snow. At the presence of a being so glorious and majestic, descending on a sudden, and appearing in a visible form before their eyes, no wonder the guard, though composed of men trained to arms, renowned for bravery, and hardened against fear, were forthwith struck with a violent tremour, and fell prostrate to the ground as dead men. To add to the terror and solemnity of the scene, when the Son of God reassumed that sacred life he had so lately laid down on the cross, and began to move in the tomb, the earth shook to its very centre, as seeming to pay homage to its rising Lord, and own the honour he did it, in spending part of three days and three nights in its dark and lonely mansion. When the earth quakes, those who seek their portion in it may well tremble, with the soldiers here, and be all dismayed. The angel having rolled away the ponderous stone from the mouth of the sepulchre, as expressive of the will of Heaven, that the Divine Prisoner should be set free, all the de-

mands of law and justice being now fully satisfied, sat down upon it, as if defying all the powers of earth and hell to detain him there one moment longer. The pious women, who came early on the first day of the week to pay their last respects to the sacred remains of their dear deceased Lord, while full of perplexity and fears at the unexpected scene, this celestial Power accosts in words of meek condescension and love, in order to bespeak their attention, and allay their distressing fears: "Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus who was crucified;" as if he should say, 'Whatever reason the enemies of Christ have to fear on this occasion, ye have none, for your pious solicitude and concern shew you to be his friends, and as such he will see you again, and cause your hearts to rejoice.' In order effectually to remove every remaining doubt and scruple, and at once convince them, by ocular demonstration, that their Lord was risen indeed, he adds, in the verse part of which is the subject of our present meditations, "He is not here; for he is risen, as he said: Come, see the place where the Lord lay." As the Evangelists Luke and John mention two angels on this occasion, it is probable that while the one here spoke of uttered these words, he stepped before the women into the sepulchre, where his fellow appeared, in the form of a young man, clothed in a long white garment, and sitting on the right side, as Mark informs us; at which both immediately took their station, the one at the head, and the other at the feet of the place where the body of Jesus so lately lay. The angelic invitation in the text concerns us no less than the devout women to whom it was first addressed; for we are all deeply interested in the solemn scenes and

and momentous consequences of our Lord's death, burial, and resurrection: But though this is at all times an exceeding proper subject of pious meditation, yet is it peculiarly seasonable in the near view of commemorating these grand and memorable events at a communion table. My dear Christian friends, and fellow intending communicants, now assembled for the important purpose of shewing forth your Redeemer's death, in order to direct your minds, and assist your pious reflections on this solemn occasion, I would address you with the angelic preacher, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay;" that you may thence learn some interesting truths, which are highly expressive of your Saviour's love and grace, and conducive to your peace and comfort.

To set a few of these before you, as the Lord may be pleased to assist, shall now be my business.—Then point out some of these dispositions of mind with which we should survey the sacred but humble spot where Jesus lay, and which the survey of it is calculated to inspire and improve. Though this might merit our regard, as a distinct part of the subject, yet is it meant to serve as an improvement of the whole.—May the Lord vouchsafe his special presence in the solemn service before us, and enable, by his grace and Spirit, to comply with the injunction in the text, in the lively exercise of faith, love, and every other gracious disposition.

I. When we survey, as proposed, the humble spot where our Lord once lay, his amazing Grace and Condescension present themselves to our view, and first claim our attentive regard. In order the more fully to perceive these, let us for a moment reflect on the primitive

primitive dignity of the illustrious person, who once for our sake deigned to descend so low. The Jews and learned Greeks of old, being blind to the essential glory of the Divine Sufferer, were stumbled at the deep debasement of his cross, and counted the doctrine thereof foolishness, in which, alas! they have been followed but by too many in every age since. To such he appears as a root out of a dry ground, having no form, comeliness, or beauty, to recommend him to their esteem and regard;—appears equally mean and uninteresting in his birth, life, and death; for Satan and the power of unbelief have so blinded the eyes of their mind, that of all objects the grave of Jesus is the last which attracts their attention. Should such still despise and reject him, they must stand by the consequences; but to you whose eyes are enlightened from above to discern something of his matchless glory and excellence, a visit to his tomb, by faith and pious meditation, will doubtless appear a pleasing, and a solemn exercise. It is not the dusty bed, or sculptured tombs of any of the lords, princes, or potentates of this world, we are here invited to survey; for though these may assume pompous titles, and seem, in their superiority over their fellow-creatures, to rise into so many gods; yet are they still but frail earthen ones, that must soon die like the meanest of the people, and leave all their pomp and glory behind them. To find such in the grave, that land where superiority is not claimed, and distinction is unknown, is no way surprising; for even there, are they not in their native place, dust to dust returned? But the person, whose temporary abode in the heart of the earth we are here called to contemplate, is the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, whose is

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the earth and the fulness thereof; yea, who can call the whole unknown extent of boundless ages, and of the immeasurable regions of space all his own, with all the myriads of beings, worlds, and events they contain, and to which they give birth. This Lord over all, though despised and rejected by many of our earth-born race, is, however, the object of angelic worship, and the Author of angelic perfection and bliss;—the Eternal's fellow or equal, and the Creator of the ends of the earth, who faints not, nor is weary, and of whose understanding there is no searching out. By him kings reign, and princes rule and decree justice, even all the nobles and judges of the earth, however little they are often disposed herein to acknowledge him; and at his sovereign pleasure must they resign their crowns and sceptres, and shrink into their shroud, though a little before millions might tremble at their menace, and bring their tribute to their feet. As clothed with our nature, the mighty potentates of heaven cast their crowns at his feet, conscious how unworthy they are to wear them in his presence; and veil their faces before him, as unable to behold the bright effulgence of his essential glory. In him every possible perfection centres, and he is the Author of existence and the source of life and happiness to a whole universe of beings. His throne is established of old, even from everlasting, and of his dominion there is no end or limits. When he thundereth, as the God of glory, with the voice of his excellency, how powerful and majestic its solemn accents! Does it not bespeak him the God of nature, who is glorious in power and terrible in majesty! Such is thy Saviour, O Christian, and say then, was it not amazing grace and condescension

scension in him to stoop so low, as to make his bed for a time in the dust of death! The most remarkable instances of human condescension, compared with this, scarce deserve our notice. As the stars hide their diminished heads before the blaze of noon; so all the gracious and renowned actions of the greatest of men, placed in this light, become obscure and disappear. Is it possible to conceive a contrast more wonderful and striking; Jesus shut up for a time the close prisoner of divine justice, a breathless mangled corpse in the tomb: and seated on an imperial throne, in the third heavens, giving laws to, and receiving the homage of the universe! To see kings and emperors resigning their robes of state, their crowns, sceptres and magnificent palaces, and appearing in rags, lodged in the meanest cottages, in order to promote the good of their loyal subjects, though a conduct so full of grace and condescension, as scarce once to be met with among men; yet, when viewed in this connexion, must not our wonder at once cease? Nay, what would be still more surprising, should all the angels of heaven be degraded into mere insects, in order to answer some important and benevolent purposes; yet even this would be no more than a transition from one species of creatures into another, betwixt which the distance is limited and easily traced: But in Christ the condescension is infinite, for he is infinitely higher than the highest; and the grace unbounded and immense, when we consider for whom he humbled himself so low; not for friends, but enemies, beings of an inferiour order, whose nature is tainted with treason and rebellion against him.

him*. The greatest of earthly kings may, in some respects, be indebted to the meanest of their subjects; but this universal Sovereign is not only exalted infinitely above us, but likewise absolutely independent of us. In his sufferings, death, and descent into the gloomy mansion of mortality, we may therefore see such grace and condescension as none but God could entertain and express. With propriety might the angel then say, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay;" come and behold there a condescension truly divine, grace and mercy manifested to the guilty and unworthy surpassing great! But,

II. We may here, in the *second* place, also learn, That Jesus died, not in appearance, as some would have it, but in reality. Without this he had not undergone the penalty annexed to the violation of the divine law, which doubtless imports an awful reality: "The day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." "The wages of sin is death." Having become surety for the guilty, who had forfeited life, with all for which it is worth while to live, into the hands of divine justice, he must not only deny himself the innocent joys and pleasures of life,—become a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, but also, as the Poet emphatically expresses it,

Pay the rigid satisfaction, death for death.

Had he not really died, he would not have answered the Mosaic typical sacrifices, which evidently pointed to him as the Lamb slain from the foun-

- * "He sunk beneath our heavy woes
 "To raise us to his throne;
 "There's not a gift his hand bestows,
 "But cost his heart a groan."

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dation of the world, as the substantial good to come, of which they were but shadows; for these, by divine appointment, were actually slain, and presented lifeless victims on God's altar, there to be consumed with fire. "It became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons and daughters to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect" through death, as well as "through sufferings." He had power over his own Spirit, to retain or dismiss it at pleasure; and hence the strong cry he uttered on the cross, a little before he expired, plainly indicates that life was yet entire in him, and nature unexhausted. When he had finished the work given him to do, and the sufferings allotted him to bear, he bowed his head, in token of submission, and as a signal to death, to whose power he willingly yielded, and so gave up his Spirit into the hands of his God and Father in heaven. Even granting some remains of life had been left, the wound of the spear, which reached his heart, whence issued blood and water, would have effectually dispatched him. But his residence so long in the tomb clearly evinces the truth and reality of his death. He was not only buried, but lay in the grave part of three days and three nights, or about the space of thirty-six hours. Besides other important ends served hereby, his enemies became quite inexcusable in their infidelity; and his revival to a new and never-dying life the more certain and conspicuous. He lay so long, that the reality of his death might appear to every candid mind unquestionable; but lay no longer, that he might not, in the language of prophecy, see corruption; for dead bodies are observed to begin to putrefy on the fourth day—especially

in warm climates, and when so wounded and bruised as his was. Come then, O Christian, and see the place where your Lord lay so long, as to evince the reality of his death beyond all rational doubt. In the *third* place here,

III. We may justly infer, from the mode of expression in the text, That Christ rose as really from the dead as he had some time before expired on the cross. To convince the pious women of this important truth was the great object the angel had in view in addressing them, as in the text and context, "Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, as he said: Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and behold, he goeth before you into Galilee, there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you." These devout followers of our Lord, during the period of his personal ministry, having seen him taken down from the cross and laid in Joseph's new tomb, when they had rested on the Sabbath, according to the commandment, resorted thither early on the first day of the week, with hearts full of love and pious solicitude, expecting, no doubt, to find him still there, and only anxious how the very large stone might be got rolled away from the mouth of it; in all probability knowing nothing of the guard of soldiers that had been placed there. The angel, having assured them that their present fears were groundless, and their distress at their supposed disappointment without foundation, takes an effectual method to convince them of their mistake, by inviting them to come and examine for themselves the spot where their Lord a

little before lay; that they might be at once satisfied he was now actually risen from the dead to die no more, according to his own prediction. For this purpose he accosts them, *Come, see the place where the Lord lay*; as much as to say, Though Jesus the Prince and Author of life humbled himself and became obedient to the death, even the death of the cross, —though he submitted to lie down for a time in this dark and narrow abode, as a proof of the reality of his death, and in order to accomplish the purposes of his mercy; yet is he now revived and risen to a new and immortal life, and left behind him sufficient documents that he was neither stole away by friends or enemies, nor rose in surprise, as if something unexpected had befallen him: Here you see the spices, and the linen clothes and rollers in which his body was wrapped, laid by themselves, and the napkin wherewith his head was bound, folded up in a place by itself; all which may at once convince you that he hath not been stolen thence, but is in very deed risen, as he said; not indeed in haste and confusion, as fearing to be surpris'd and detected by the guards, but with all that composure and presence of mind which became the majesty of the Son of God. From the circumstances here alluded to, John inferred, as he in reason might, the truth of his Lord's resurrection: "He saw, and believed *¹²"

The purport of the angel's message to the godly women, when filled with distressing fears at what they saw and felt, is the same with that which our Lord afterwards announces to his beloved disciple, when he fell at his feet as dead, upon a vision of him in his

* John xx. 8.

glory: "Fear not; I am the first and the last. I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death*." Fear not, ye humble, timid, penitent believers, whom the thoughts of guilt and apprehended wrath distress; for Jesus died for your sins, according to the scriptures. Fear not ye, who oppose the power and lament the occasional prevalence of sin; for Jesus died to redeem you from all iniquity, and to purify you to himself, by his blood, a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Of all the inducements to holiness, the ardent love of a dying Saviour presents the most powerful; for while other motives persuade and engage, this draws and constrains by an influence almost irresistible.

"Behold I am alive for evermore." Delightful thought, to be assured, O Jesus, that thou art exalted beyond the reach of death, exalted as the King Eternal and Immortal, to secure a happy immortality for thy people! So essential is the certainty of our Lord's resurrection to the peace, comfort, and hope of a Christian, that the Apostle assures us, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, your faith is also vain:"—"If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins,"—under their condemning guilt, and reigning power: "Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished†." According to his reasoning, the resurrection of Christ necessarily infers that of his people; and the certainty of theirs granted, his must be presupposed. Providence, ever wise in its dispensations, had so ordered matters and over-ruled the purpose of the Jews, that he was buried in a new

* Rev. i. 17. 18. † 1 Cor. xv. 14. 17. 18.

tomb, where never man before was laid, that there might be no room to suspect any other than he arose thence. They intended that he should make his grave with the wicked, with the two malefactors who were executed with him; and probably, with this view, prepared his along with theirs, allotting him the same station he held on the cross, the middle betwixt them, as being in their opinion a greater criminal than either; yet God ordained that he should make his grave with the rich and honourable, which perfectly reconciles what the Prophet foretold with this fact as recorded by the Evangelists: "He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death *." Peter assures us, in his address to the multitude, who were struck with wonder at the miraculous effects of the extraordinary effusion of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, that God hath raised up his Son Jesus, whom they had taken, and by wicked hands crucified and slain, having loosed the bands of death; because, adds he, it was not possible that he should be holden of it †. It was impossible he should be held captive by death; for he had power to lay down his life and to take it again, and no man could take it from him without his consent. If he hath not re-assumed the life he resigned on the cross, all our pains in religion, and the hopes to which it gives rise, are vain, delusive, and lost. What a sublime description does the Evangelist give us, in the verses preceding our text, of some of the concomitant circumstances of that solemn event, of the absolute certainty of which the angel expressly assured the women! "Behold there was a great earth-quake, for the angel of the

* Isa. liii. 9. † Acts ii. 23. 24.

“Lord descended from heaven, and rolled back the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and sat upon it; his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow; and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.” For these the angel had not one word of comfort, but to the pious women he said, in answer to their distressing thoughts and anxious solicitude, “Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said, Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”

The chief men among the Jews took the most effectual precautions which the case could admit, to secure the dead body of Jesus in the tomb, probably intending to produce it publicly on the third day, in vindication of what they had done, and to extinguish the remaining hopes of his followers. In so far as respected them, these precautions were indeed quite unnecessary; for, circumstances considered, what danger could in reason be apprehended from this quarter? But conscious guilt often creates groundless fears, even while it leaves secure where real dangers lie. When the Shepherd was smitten by the awakened sword of justice, the sheep of his flock were scattered abroad. The disciples of our Lord had but a little before forsook him in the hour of danger, and fled each to his own; and we do not find that they resumed courage enough, John excepted, to mix with the crowd of spectators to witness the last solemn scene of his life, or attend his remains to the tomb. “We trusted (said they) it had been he who should have redeemed Israel;” but now that he was dead and buried, their hopes seem to have expired with him. During that gloomy period, their chief con-

cern seems to have been, how they might best provide for their own safety. Can we then once suppose, that, in their present forlorn and dejected state, they would attempt and execute the bold enterprize of carrying off their Master's body, either by stealth or force, from amidst a guard of armed soldiers, whose life must pay for the loss of the sacred déposité? Let malice propagate, and infidelity embrace a supposition so fraught with absurdity; but reason and common sense must give it the lie, while the sacred records place the important fact in the most clear and consistent light.

Divine providence, however, whose measures and arrangements are always founded in wisdom, overruled the counsels and expedients of men to accomplish the decrees and purposes of Heaven, and bring forth truth unto victory. These counsels and expedients, wise and prudent as they might appear, were, however, made to subserve that very cause they were meant to overthrow, and to afford all that decisive evidence the Jews so earnestly wished and attempted to counteract and suppress. Herein the wise were taken in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the prudent turned up-side down! To what a silly wretched shift were the Jewish rulers reduced, in order to suppress the concurrent evidence of our Lord's resurrection, when they went about to hire the soldiers, these unexceptionable witnesses of the interesting fact, by a large sum of money, to give out that his disciples came by night, while they were asleep, and stole away his body from the sepulchre! Had this been really the case, they would have been the first to enter a complaint against them to the governor, and to demand their punishment. An hypothesis so
absurd

absurd carries its own refutation with it; for how could the guard witness a fact, and give a just report of it, which should have happened, by their own confession, while they were fast asleep? What is all this, in effect, but hiring them to say that they knew nothing of the matter? Who, that reflects for a moment on the strictness of the Roman discipline, can bring himself to believe, that men trained up under it, would allow themselves to sleep on guard, or, if awake, would suffer the tomb at which they were posted to be rifled in their presence by a few unarmed fishermen, and the body they were so strictly enjoined to watch and secure there, to be thus carried off without resistance? And to pretend that all this was done when they were asleep, is too palpable an absurdity to need any serious refutation. To what pitiful expedients are they often reduced who take a bad cause by the hand, and are determined to support it at all hazards! While falsehood and error ever seek to hide their deformed aspect in shade and subterfuge, which they indeed require, truth courts the light, and fears not the strictest scrutiny. It is not meant, by these remarks, to enter into the merits of the argument in favour of our Lord's resurrection, nor is this indeed very necessary in a Christian audience; yet as this important fact, on which all our hopes as Christians are suspended, hath been, and is still by many called in question, these few imperfect hints may serve to shew the unreasonableness of such, and at the same time to confirm our own faith in the certainty of that sacred event.

May we not then rest assured of the truth and certainty of an event confirmed by the testimony of so many respectable witnesses, friends and enemies, human

man and angelic? With what extatic pleasure and delight may we view Jesus reviving from the dead, proving himself hereby the Son of God with power, and bringing in the joyful dawn of an immortal day! Let us then frequently come, on the wings of faith, love, and devout contemplation, and survey the humble spot where our Lord once lay; whence we may learn this important and consolatory truth, that he is risen indeed, and that to the possession of glory, honour, and immortality. What time your faith, O Christian, begins to fail, and the fears of death, and corruption in his dreary mansion, to overwhelm your spirit, recal to mind the words of Jesus, how he said for your comfort, "Fear not, I have the keys of death and hell," or the grave; "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me shall never die,"—shall never taste of the second death; "because I live ye shall live also." This is a firm, an immutable foundation of hope, "which hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the vail, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." I may, in the *fourth* place, here observe,

IV. That our Lord's descent into the gloomy grave perfumed, if I may so express it, that loathsome mansion of corruption, and consecrated it into a bed of sweet repose for all his people; where each shall lie in peace and quiet till the heavens, having passed away with a crashing noise, are no more. As death is to the wicked a king of terrors, the executioner

tioner of unrelenting justice; so the grave is a strong prison, a dark and deep dungeon, where they are reserved, as so many state prisoners, "against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men," when the irreversible sentence of their Almighty Judge shall be executed to the full upon them. To such the grave is a dreary pit indeed; a land dark and dismal as the shadow of death itself; for the pale horse and his rider bring hell and damnation in their train. Christ's confinement for a time there, as the prisoner of law and justice, so far from yielding such any comfort, or even the most distant dawn of hope, only furnishes the strongest argument to prove the utter impossibility of their escape; "for if such things were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" But though the grave, that place of skulls and land of deep forgetfulness, where the memory and the bodies of the wicked rot together exhibits nought to the ungodly but what, like the pillar of cloud of old to Pharaoh's host, is dark, hideous and terrible; yet to Zion's travellers this valley of Achor presents a door of hope, and in its darkest gloom light breaks forth. Though the impenitent and unbelieving may exclaim, at the approach of the last messenger, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" and though nature is apt to recoil, even in the very best, at the near prospect of that event; yet, through faith in the once crucified and buried, but now exalted and ever-living Jesus, the weakest in God's household, even babes in Christ, may play around the hole of this asp, and put their hand upon this cockatrice den without experiencing any harm. Though, by reason of guilt, death is in itself a king of terrors, and the grave a devouring monster, which never says
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"it is enough;" yet against both the real Christian is complete in his Lord, "having on the breast-plate of righteousness; and, for an helmet, the hope of salvation;" yea, being clad with "the whole armour of God." Thus furnished and equipped, he may quit the howling wilderness for the valley of the shadow of death, like a person who goes forth to take an evening walk, while every surrounding object wears a pleasing aspect; or resign his mortal frame to the dust, in the assured hope of a glorious resurrection to a happy immortality, like one who reclines himself on his bed for repose after the cares, labours, and fatigues of the day. In this view, the death of the righteous is in scripture often compared to a sleep—designed *a falling asleep in Jesus*: and David expresses his faith and hope in the prospect of that event, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Here they lie still and are quiet; sleep and are at rest*, till the archangel address their mouldered frame, "Awake, and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for your dew is as the dew of herbs†." Here all the sons of God, having got safe through the tempestuous ocean of human life, and reached the peaceful shore, are as in a secure haven, till the storms of winter are past, and the rains over and gone, when the voice of the celestial Turtle shall be heard in their land, announcing the commencement of an everlasting spring. Come then ye weary sojourners, who long for the evening shades which shall bid you rest from your labours; come, see the

* Job iii. 13.

† Isa. xxvi. 19,

place where your Divine Lord once lay, and rested from his, that he might convert it into a chamber of rest, a bed of undisturbed repose for you, in which you may each one walk and lie down secure till the resurrection.

V. I may farther observe, in the *fifth* place, That from the survey of that memorable spot where the sacred body of Jesus once lay, we may justly infer that all the demands of justice, with respect to his people, must have been fully satisfied. We are told by the Prophet, that "the Lord hath laid on him "the iniquity of them all." To this the Church echoes, "Surely he hath born our griefs, and carried our sorrows; he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him." With all this, the declaration of God himself perfectly agrees: "For the transgression of my people was he stricken." And, (may we not add?) brought down to the dust of death. To all the claims of justice on an elect world, he voluntarily subscribed, and, as their surety and substitute, paid the uttermost farthing of that immense debt they owed, till he could say on the cross, "It is finished;" or, in other words, bore their sins in his own body on the tree, till he made complete atonement for them. Having made his soul an offering for sin, poured it out even unto the death as a grateful oblation to God; during his stay in the tomb, to which it behoved him to be brought, the warrant for his enlargement was sued out in heaven, and an angel dispatched thence to set open his prison door, and proclaim liberty to the Royal Captive. Thus was he taken, as the sacred writer,

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er above referred to expresses it, from prison and from judgment, liberated by a solemn and judicial act. The miracles which he wrought in his life were all so many evidences of his divine mission; yet was it by his resurrection from the dead he declared himself the Son of God with power. By his obedience and death he magnified the law and made it honourable, both in its precepts and penalty; finished transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in an everlasting righteousness; whence, to the believer in him, "there is now no condemnation." By all this he glorified his Father on earth, finished the work he assigned him, and so paved the way for the exaltation of his own human nature to a state of glory and immortality with him in heaven. Had not Christ fully paid the immense price of our redemption, completely satisfied the justice of God for our sins, and wrought out a perfect and everlasting righteousness for our justification; to all which he had engaged himself as our Surety; can we suppose that God, as a righteous Judge, would bring him from prison and from judgment, raise him to his own right hand, and testify his approbation of what he had done, and entire acquiescence in it, by the effusion of the Spirit, in his miraculous gifts and operations, according to his promise? To be assured that God hath done all this to and for his beloved Son, is a clear demonstration that he fulfilled all righteousness, that he did and suffered the utmost law and justice could exact. Hence that challenge of the Apostle, with the reason on which it is founded, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died,

“died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even
 “at the right hand of God, who also maketh inter-
 “cession for us.” In viewing therefore the place
 where he once lay, we may discover what cannot
 otherwise be seen in heaven, earth, or hell,—the law
 magnified, justice satisfied, and mercy flowing to the
 chief of sinners; and that by the incarnation, obedi-
 ence, and death of a person altogether divine! In hea-
 ven the law is indeed magnified, yet is it only by
 the obedience of creatures; in hell justice, awfully
 incensed, exacts its due, yet will never be satisfied;
 and on earth, neither by obedience nor sufferings
 can the law be magnified, or justice satisfied. Come
 then all ye who are deeply sensible of your utter in-
 ability to satisfy either in your own persons, and
 willing to be wholly indebted to Jesus, as the great
 law-fulfiller, and the end thereof for righteousness to
 those that believe, come, see the place where he once
 lay for you, and there behold, with growing joy and
 gratitude, the most satisfying evidences that the ho-
 ly law of God is fulfilled, in all its spirituality, ob-
 ligation, and extent, by his own eternal and beloved
 Son; and stern justice not only satisfied, but com-
 mencing mercy’s guardian and harbinger to the sons
 of men: which leads me farther to observe,

VI. That in Christ’s revival, and rising from that
 place where he once so long lay, we have a sure
 pledge, earnest, and pattern of our own future resur-
 rection from the grave. As it is ordained for men
 once to die, for the good as well as the wicked, so
 the grave is the long home of our race, the house
 appointed for all living. It is likewise ordained for
 both to rise one day thence; but then their resur-
 rection,

rection, in its nature and consequences, will be as different as their character in life and exit from it were. "The hour," says John, "is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice," viz. the voice of the Son of God, "and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation *." Those who now refuse subjection to him in his saving characters, will he indeed raise up at the last day; but then it shall be in order to display the glory of his power and holiness, justice and veracity upon them: "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him," to whom he will be revealed from heaven, only in the character of a Sovereign Almighty Judge, "to punish them with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." The righteous, on the contrary, will be raised up by him in virtue of their interest in the new covenant, which includes the whole man, and the happiness thereof for ever, and of their vital union to himself, the surety of that covenant, as the members of his mystical body. While the wicked are reserved in the grave for the solemn advent of the Judge to execute their sentence; the righteous are there prisoners of hope, and find it a safe retreat, and peaceful haven, where they shall lie secure, till all the storms and tempests which infest this lower region are blown over. All this is secured by the death of Christ, and his descent into the silent tomb. As he is the first-born among many brethren, the first-fruits of them who sleep in the dust, of such

* John v. 28. 29.

as have died in him; so he rose in a public character, as the head and representative of the many sons and daughters he will bring to glory. As in his death we see the price of our redemption, so in his resurrection from the grave, we may behold the earnest and exemplar of our own, as also a blessed pledge and demonstrative proof of a glorious immortality. Were the first-fruits to the Jews of old a pledge and earnest of the full harvest? the few first ripe grapes of the whole vintage? so is the resurrection of Christ with respect to all his people. He and they have one Spirit dwelling in them, by whose powerful agency his human nature was revived and re-united, as the head of his whole mystical body, and whose efficacious operation will one day raise up all the members complete in him. This precious and heart-animating truth the Apostle in express terms asserts, "If
 " the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead,
 " dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the
 " dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his
 " Spirit that dwelleth in you.*" With him may we, therefore, say, "But now is Christ risen from the
 " dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept," whence we may infer, that "they who are fallen a-
 " sleep in him cannot perish." Hear him saying to his Church, by his Prophet, in language beautifully accommodated to the future resurrection of his people, and expressive of its connexion with his own,
 " Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead
 " body shall they arise: awake and sing, ye that dwell
 " in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and
 " the earth shall cast out the dead"—"Shall disclose

* Rom. viii. 11.

"her blood, and shall no more cover her slain*." The innocent blood, the blood of the saints and martyrs, which hath been shed upon the earth like water, shall be brought to light in that day when God will make inquisition for it. The saints may be said to have arisen with Christ, or, as above, to rise with his dead body, inasmuch as the resurrection of the head implies and secures that of the members, and are indeed said to be set down with him in heavenly places: for he rose as the first-fruits of them that slept, and believers shall rise in virtue of their union with him, and fellowship in his resurrection, in which they are to be conformed to him. To this may apply that saying of the Prophet Hosea, "Let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us; in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight†." These words have a plain reference to Christ's resurrection; yet, at the same time, include that of his people, which stands inseparably connected therewith.

What God said to his ancient Church, in a season of peculiar calamity, may be viewed as addressed to his people in the prospect of death: "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself, as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be over-past." At the voice of Christ these doors will fly open, and those who have slept, many of them for some thousand years, awake, and come forth from their secret chambers, fresh and active as the bounding roe, blooming in all the vigour of immortal youth.

* Isa. xxvi. 19. 21. † Hosea vi. 1. 2.

As the resurrection of Christ is the pledge and earnest, so is it also the pattern and exemplar of that of his people. These frail mortal bodies which are now the seat of so many diseases, and too often, alas! the instruments of unrighteousness, and which will soon be sown in weakness and dishonour, shall, by that efficacious power by which he subdues all things to himself, be raised glorious, spiritual, powerful, and immortal, the very reverse of what they now are; and thus be fashioned after the resemblance of his own glorious body. Something of that glory which will one day invest the bodies of the saints was manifested on mount Tabor, when our Lord's countenance is said to have shone as the sun, in his meridian strength, and his raiment, through the beams of glory which darted from his sacred body, became bright and glistering as the light. Under the law if an earthen vessel caught any ceremonial defilement, it was to be broken; but if formed of more costly materials to be rinsed with water, or purified by fire. Man partakes of the nature of both, and the mode of his purification from moral defilement is hereby not unfitly shadowed forth. His soul, that precious vessel formed by the immediate hand of God himself, having been defiled by that abominable thing sin, must be washed in the laver of regeneration, and renewed by the Holy Spirit, whose purifying influences are compared to a refiner's fire; and his body, which is made and framed of the dust, being tainted by the polluting stains of iniquity, before it can be perfectly freed from these, must be broken as to pieces by the stroke of death, and reduced to its first principles in the grave. Here, however, their dust is precious in God's sight, as the fragments of a golden bowl, which he will one day

fashion into a vessel of honour, fitted for his own use. He hath given commandment concerning the bones of his saints, and charged the grave and the depths of the sea to keep their remains in safe custody until that day. When rocks, with costly gems, and mountains, whose bowels are filled with precious ore, are abandoned to the fury of the consuming flames; these will be rescued from the universal wreck, constituted Jehovah's peculiar treasure and choicest jewels, translated into his heavenly kingdom, and made there to shine as the brightness of the firmament, as the stars and the sun for ever and ever. Hath God exalted his Son Jesus, by setting him at his own right hand, far above all principalities and powers, and every thing that is named in heaven and on earth? To shew how much he is disposed and determined to share this honour with his people, hear his own words: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne;" — "and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me." On that glorious and ever to be celebrated morning on which Christ arose from the dead, and became the first-fruits of them that slept, he exhibited a grand specimen of the complete salvation of our souls, and redemption of our bodies. As the new creature, the workmanship of the Holy Spirit, is Christ formed in the heart the hope of glory; so there is a conformity to him even in the inferior part of human nature; for that glory which his heavenly Father bestowed on him as man and Mediator when he ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on high, and which he shall for ever possess, as the glorified

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rified Head of his mystical body the Church, will be also impart one day to all the members, in their respective measure, and secure to them world without end*.

THE SECOND PART.

HAVING considered some of these precious and consolatory truths which may be seen and learned at Jesus' tomb, I would now only add,

VII. That the survey of it also affords a clear confirmation of our Lord's Divine Mission, and, indeed, of all the doctrines which he hath taught. "Come see the place where the Lord lay," says the angel to the women, and, with them, to all who enjoy the gospel. 'Come, examine minutely for yourselves, and observe that he is not here, as you expected. See, the tomb is empty, only the grave-clothes and the spicery are left behind; whence you may infer, that he is risen, as he said, to a glorious state of being and enjoyment, where these and every outward accommodation are for ever superseded.'

This, with all those other circumstances which the Evangelists have recorded, as attending our Lord's resurrection, evince, beyond all rational doubt, that

* As this Discourse, in transcribing for the Press, hath acquired considerable enlargements throughout, it may not be improper, for the convenience of the reader, to divide it, though the plan indeed supposes the whole was delivered before the solemn service.

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he hath risen indeed, according to his own prediction, the exact fulfilment of which sufficiently establishes his character as a Prophet sent from God. The glorious messenger of these good tidings of great joy directs the attention of the women to two things, in proof of what he said;—his own word now fulfilled, which they might recollect on this occasion, “He is risen as he said;” and his tomb now empty, which he wished them particularly to examine, in order to remove every remaining doubt of the absolute certainty of the event he announced, “Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” Not finding him in the sacred spot, yet seeing, upon an attentive survey, sufficient proofs that he was not carried thence by stealth, as the Jews had insinuated to Pilate, when applying for a guard to watch his tomb, and afterwards gave out, might they not safely acquiesce in the truth of what they heard, especially when the angel solemnly pledges his own veracity in confirmation of it,—“lo, I have told you,” and who can say that the word spoken by him was not steadfast? All this Christ himself very soon confirms; for as the women were departing from the sepulchre in haste, to apprise the disciples of what they had heard and seen, as enjoined by the angel, “Behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail, and they came, and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go, tell my brethren, that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.”

The saying of Christ, to which the angel referred the women on this occasion, for the confirmation of the joyful message entrusted him to carry to their ears, is probably what he spoke to the Jews and their leaders, when they demanded a sign to prove his claim

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to the character of Messiah; or what he said to his own disciples in private, in order to prepare their minds for what was soon to happen, and fortify them against the scandal of the cross; or it may possibly include both. To the former he said, "As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly: so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."—"Destroy, or (as it might be rendered) ye will destroy this temple, (*viz.* the temple of his body, to which he, at the same time, probably pointed) and in three days I will raise it up." To the latter, "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day:"—"And while they (*viz.* the disciples) abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again; and they were exceeding sorry*." From these passages it is evident that our Lord had a full and distinct prescience of his own death, with all its circumstances; for while the event exactly corresponds to what he foretold, must he not have clearly foreseen it? As he could not re-animate his own dead body, were he not truly and essentially God, or the Author and Fountain of life; so we cannot once suppose, that a being of infinite perfection, who abhors falsehood and dissimulation, would work a miracle to verify the predictions and ascertain the claims of a mere impostor; thus abetting his attempt

* Matth. xii. 40. John ii. 19. Matth. xvi. 21. xvii.

to impose on mankind, in a matter which so deeply affected his own glory, and their most important concerns. That the blessed Jesus actually died on the cross there can be no doubt; for the soldiers sent to dispatch the crucified persons by breaking their legs, declared to Pilate that he was dead already, which made this, in his case, unnecessary;—that he as actually rose from the place where he was intombed, is equally clear and evident from the sacred records; whence we must allow, that either he had power to re-assume his own life, which himself repeatedly asserts, or that he was raised by the power of the Father, the great Author and Preserver of life. That he had power to revive his own body is evident from what he more than once told the Jews, and cannot be called in question if we admit his claim to Godhead: that his resurrection is ascribed to the Father and the Spirit is also manifest from scripture; and, therefore, all the persons of Deity, by concurring in that event, are to be viewed as setting to their seal to the truth of his sacred Mission, of all the doctrines he taught, and of his real and proper Sonship: And will any presume to say, that they have annexed their seal herein to sanction falsehood and imposture? Thus the whole Christian system, which claims Jesus for its Author, was authenticated by the seal of Heaven, in the events which took place at Christ's revival from the tomb. When the power of God interposed to break the bars of the grave, and restore from death the great Author and Finisher of our faith, all this was ratified and confirmed by the most decisive proof and irrefragable arguments.

By the same important event, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, the acceptance of his sacrifice

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was declared, whence God is now in him reconciled to, and also reconciling a guilty world to himself, not imputing to those who believe their trespasses. Hereby too a firm foundation is laid for his people's faith and hope, which would otherwise issue in shame and disappointment. We are taught by the Apostle to consider this event likewise as a proof of our Lord's supreme Deity, or his relation to God as a Son in a sense peculiar to himself: who was, says he, "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead*." Elsewhere he directs our views to it, as an infallible argument to the world, to prove the certainty of a general judgment: "God now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead†." The Apostle, when arguing for the imputation of that righteousness which is by faith to all who "believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead," as well as to faithful Abraham, authorises such to say, "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification‡." To the same purpose he adds, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life§;" that is, his resurrection to life, or that life to the full and perpetual possession of which he was raised. "Now, if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall

* Rom. i. 4. † Acts xvii. 30. 31. ‡ Rom. iv. 25.

§ Rom. v. 10.

“also live with him: knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him *.” From these, and the like declarations of sacred writ, it appears of what mighty importance the resurrection of the Son of God is in the Christian system, and how much it tends to confirm the Divine Mission and claims of its sacred Author, and the various doctrines which he taught. As in a circle every straight line drawn from the circumference must meet in the centre; so all the doctrines of divine revelation, one way or other, terminate in his death and consequent resurrection, and thence derive all their power and efficacy to relieve and comfort, either the awakened sinner, or distressed saint.

Thus have I attempted to illustrate some of these important and soul-animating truths, which, it is apprehended, the believing survey of the place where our Lord once lay for our behoof, is calculated to suggest: Such as,—his amazing grace and condescension,—the reality of his death,—the absolute certainty of his resurrection,—that by his short residence in the tomb, the grave is consecrated to his people,—that from his resurrection thence we may infer, that all the demands of law and justice were fully satisfied,—also our own future resurrection, of which his was the pledge and pattern,—and the confirmation of his divine mission, and all the doctrines which he taught.——On these I have made free to enlarge, perhaps indeed beyond what may be thought proper, when it was meant to discuss the subject in one discourse; yet, I hope, not beyond what was acceptable to you, who have

* Rom. vi. 8. 9.

come up to-day seeking, with the pious women, Jesus who was crucified, with hearts actuated and constrained by all the tender solicitude of devout affection. Though some of the ideas may have occurred more than once; yet is it hoped that those who love the Lord Jesus will not deem this a vain repetition. Let me now, in a few thoughts, direct you to some proper improvement of the subject, suited to the principal occasion of our present meeting; and this I shall do, by pointing out, as proposed, some of these gracious dispositions with which we should celebrate the death of Christ, and contemplate his transient visit to that humble mansion, the tomb; dispositions which that exercise, through the Divine blessing, is admirably calculated to inspire and promote.

1. Have we now, my Christian Brethren, the immediate prospect of shewing forth our Redeemer's death at his holy table? and does the solemn ordinance before us exhibit the most lively emblem of these sufferings which brought him to that place which we were this day called to contemplate? Be it then our pious care and study, to commemorate that solemn and interesting event, in the exercise of grateful admiration and faith unfeigned. The person who can be ungrateful towards his benefactor, who can render evil for good, and hatred for love, is universally condemned: and yet, could we forget our obligations to the love and grace of Jesus, the most detestable instance of ingratitude among men would be as nothing when compared with ours. Such ingratitude would be aggravated by an insolent contempt of goodness the most unmerited, and love surpassing great. All ye who have seen the glory

and tasted the goodness of King Messiah,—who have felt the constraining power of his love, and the refreshing influence of his grace, do not your hearts recoil at the thought of forgetting his precious benefits? nay, do they not expand with gratitude at the remembrance of them, and survey them at times at least, with sentiments of pious wonder and admiration? Is not that work and doing of the Lord, in laying the stone rejected by the builders so low, in order to become a solid foundation for the glorious superstructure of mercy, and raising it thence to be the head-stone of the corner, imparting strength and beauty to the whole, is not this marvellous in your eyes? Upon the most transient survey of a scheme so replete with gracious wonders, are you not brought to exclaim, O the height and the depth, the length and the breadth of the love of God in Christ Jesus! unsearchable are its treasures, and its ways past finding out! “Herein is love,” says one who felt it shed abroad in his own heart, “not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.” Have expressions of condescension and beneficence from dignified characters among men, power to command our grateful admiration? and is it possible our hearts should remain insensible to the displays of our Redeemer’s grace and condescension, and the fruits of his benignity and love? These are like an immense ocean, in the contemplation of the boundless extent and depth of which all our powers may be lost in wonder and amazement. Did Jesus, the Son of the Highest, stoop so very low, to raise us sinners from the fearful pit and miry clay of guilt and wretchedness, to the highest elevation of honour and blessedness? and shall not we call upon
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our souls, and all that is within us, to bless the Lord, to magnify his holy name, and not forget his benefits? Shall we not, with sentiments of joy and gratitude, adopt the beloved John's grateful anthem, "Un-
 " to him that loved us, and washed us from our sins
 " in his own blood, and hath made us kings and
 " priests unto God, even his Father; to him be glo-
 " ry and dominion for ever and ever. Amen?" Alas! that so few are disposed from the heart to join him in this doxology. If ingratitude for common favours be justly deemed base and detestable, what language can paint the odious deformity of that vice when it has Jesus for its object? and yet with this you are chargeable in the sight of God, who have never felt the constraining efficacy of his love and death, as a powerful principle of new obedience, nor been led, under the influence of that divine disposition, to shew forth that death, and contemplate his temporary abode in the tomb. But behold, ye believing intending communicants, behold, with adoring wonder and lively gratitude, your redeeming God, making, as one beautifully expresses it,

" Darkness his curtain, and his bed in dust;

" Tho' sun and stars are dust beneath his throne!"

And in the exercise of these dispositions commemorate an event which places all your hopes on the firmest basis.

2. Love to Jesus should incline us to comply with the angel's invitation in the text, *Come, see the place where the Lord lay*. Love to him should also actuate and engage our hearts there, and in the solemn service before us, while objects are exhibited to our faith, admirably fitted to animate and inflame every affection of the heart. Till this grace is implanted in the

soul, and drawn forth towards its proper object, to shew forth the death of Christ, either to his glory or our own comfort and edification, is morally impossible. This ordinance, however, as it indispensably requires, so is it wisely adapted to revive and cherish the Christian's love. Ye who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and been drawn to him by the cords of his love, come see the place to which he once descended for you; and when you have there contemplated his sufferings, death, and temporary residence in the tomb, till the fire of divine love begin to burn; come and encompass his altar with the voice of joy and grateful praise, there to receive a fresh proof and pledge of his love, and to have yours to him increased and confirmed. While the hearts of most men, like Bethlehem's Inn of old, have room for every stranger who applies,—for “the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life,” but none for the Son of God; let the language of ours be, “Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, why standest thou without.”—“If thy presence go not up with us,” to thy table, and through the remains of our journey in the wilderness, “carry not up hence.” If such have been the habitual desires of your heart, and now constitute the genuine breathings of your soul, you may hear him reply, “My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.”—“O love the Lord, all ye his saints: for the Lord preserveth the faithful.” Love him, because he first loved you, and gave himself to the death for you.” Behold, God hath so loved you, “that he gave his only begotten Son,” that you might not perish, but have everlasting life! Well may you then exclaim, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!” When you
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view the Son of God, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, uniting your nature to himself, becoming a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;—view him despised and rejected of men, leading a poor, self-denied, persecuted life, and at last dying a painful, ignominious, accursed death, in order to finish transgression make an end of sin-offering, make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in an everlasting righteousness, that so our complete salvation might be consistent with the honour of the divine administration;—when you view him doing all this, not only without your solicitation, but even contrary to your desert; are you not ready to own that he is justly entitled to the supreme affection of our heart, and the unreserved obedience of our lives? If love, and the native expressions thereof, naturally conciliate the affection of its object; when Jesus is viewed in the garden, on the cross, and in the tomb, is not the moving spectacle he exhibits in these solemn situations, fitted to slay the latent enmity of the heart, and inspire sentiments of the purest and most ardent love? If the Jews remarked, on seeing him weep at Lazarus' grave, "Behold how he loved him," with still greater propriety may we say, "Behold how he loved us," when we see him shed not merely tears, but his very blood for us, and still farther commending his love by going down to the silent abode of death, to consecrate and perfume that noisome mansion for our reception! Come then, ye who sincerely love the Lord Jesus, and commemorate that death which is the life of your hope, and the spring of your peace and joy, as connected with that revival to a never-dying life, which is to you the grand security and

pledge of a glorious resurrection to a blessed immortality.

3. Besides, another gracious disposition with which we should view the place where the Lord lay, is filial sorrow for sin, with growing hatred of it. In tracing, by the aid of faith, the lowly steps our Divine Redeemer took to raise us to his heavenly mansions, such effects naturally follow. "They shall look," says a Prophet, "on him whom they have pierced, and mourn." Can the real Christian remain unmoved, when he beholds his Dear Lord seized by wicked hands, made to carry his own cross to the place of execution, pierced and nailed thereto for his sins!—beholds him enduring the chastisement of his peace, the stripes by which he is healed, bowing his sacred head in death, and buried a mangled corpse in the grave! When he views sin as the occasion of all this, is it possible he can roll it under his tongue as a sweet morsel? indulge it in heart and life without remorse? As soon may a dutiful son embrace with affection the man who hath stabbed his parent to the heart, and look with pleasure on the weapon employed to perpetrate the horrid deed; or a tender husband the assassin of the wife of his bosom, who was dear to him as his own soul; as one whose heart is penetrated with the amazing love of a dying Jesus, continue in the love and practice of sin, which melted his heart like wax in the midst of his bowels, poured out his soul like water, and brought him to the dust of death. Instead of exclaiming against Judas who betrayed him, Pilate who sentenced him to death, the Roman soldiers who bore an active part in his sufferings, and the Jews whose malice could scarce be satiated with his blood; he will blame and lament

lament his own sins and base ingratitude towards Heaven, as the procuring cause of the whole. When you view the death and tomb of Jesus, therefore, let your repentance for sin be kindled together, and your abhorrence of it increased and confirmed. A heart broken for sin, and weaned from the love of it, well comports with the solemn action in which you are in a little to be engaged. "Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. This cup is the New Testament (or covenant) in my blood, shed for the remission of the sins of many, drink ye all of it."—"This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me: For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." Are these the words of Jesus, recorded by his Spirit for our comfort and direction? Was he condemned and smitten for our transgressions? shut up as the close prisoner of law and justice in the tomb, that we might be acquitted at the bar of God and conscience, and adjudged to the actual possession of eternal life? and shall sin, then, which brought all this upon him, and inconceivably more, retain still the regard of our heart, and find a harbour in our breast? Nay rather—are not we ready to exclaim, God forbid: how shall we that are dead to sin, through the death of Christ, live any longer therein?

4. Moreover—We may, at the same time, survey the place where the Lord lay with growing joy. This disposition or frame of mind is nearly allied to the former, and natively flows from it; for the more deeply humbled the Christian is under a sense of sin, as crucifying the Lord of glory, the nearer is he to solid peace and comfort. "Blessed," says our Lord, "are

“are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.” And agreeably to this the Psalmist remarks, “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”—“As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing,” must appear a strange paradox to the men of the world, whose joys and sorrows originate thence; and, indeed, is only explicable on Christian principles. All that hath been suggested in the illustration of the subject, may serve to shew how much the Saviour’s death and resurrection contribute to the Christian’s joy and triumph. His grave is a rich and never-failing source of peace and consolation to his real followers in this vale of tears; and when it proves not so theirs is the blame. We ought, it is true, to mourn and weep at Jesus’ cross and sepulchre, not indeed for him, but for ourselves; yet need we not sorrow there as they who have no hope, for these usher in the dawn of a joyful immortal day. As his gospel brings life and immortality to light, so his death is the infinite price by which these have been procured for his people; and his revival from the tomb, and ascension to glory, the grand security of their enjoying them for ever. Wherefore, while we attend the dear remains of our pious departed friends to their long home, or anticipate our own future removal thither; let our faith terminate on Jesus, their and our resurrection and life, and then shall we not mourn and sorrow like them who have no hope: for the true believer in him may look with triumph on this land of desolation,—this dark valley of the shadow of death. The grave is the house appointed for us all; and how soon we may be brought thither God alone knoweth. This is a serious thought to all; an alarming one to the ungodly! Let not such, however, as seek Jesus

Jesus with their whole heart, be afraid of the king of terrors, or his dreary mansion; for he, their Lord and Friend, vanquished the one and made his abode for a time in the other; thus securing to his people complete victory over both. This solemn event and lonely dwelling present, like the pillar of cloud to the Jews of old, to all the followers of the Lamb, a bright and cheering light, to direct their path safely and comfortably through the dark and dreaded valley to Emmanuel's land,—that blessed land of promise, of which the earthly Canaan was but a faint type. Are we firmly persuaded, from the word of God, that Jesus died to expiate his people's sins, and rose again for their justification, as the first-fruits of them that slept; rose to take possession of eternal life in their name, and as their head? then may we rest fully assured, that they who have died in a state of vital union with him by faith will God quicken to an immortal and glorious life, and gather together with him at his second coming, as members with their head, that he may be glorified in them, while his glory is reflected upon them, and their unfading felicity secured by him. Hear him now address his sincere followers, from his glorified state, and imperial throne in heaven: "Fear not; I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore; and have the keys of hell and of death." Though despised and rejected in ours, he is Lord of both worlds, and doth in either according to his pleasure; while none can counteract his procedure, or say to him with efficacy, "What, or why dost thou?" Between this world and the next lieth the valley of the shadow of death, that dreary region of darkness and desolation over which the king of terrors hath extended his gloomy

gloomy empire. Nature recoils at the prospect, and shrinks back at the swellings of Jordan. The believer, however, and indeed he alone, hath nothing here to fear, because he shall be safely conducted to the holy and pleasant land beyond it, by that great Shepherd of the sheep, whom God brought again from the dead; and who can, therefore, shew us the path of life through the dark vale of death. That event, solemnly interesting as it is to the children of God, is only a passage from one apartment in their Father's house into another; and their redeeming Lord and unchangeable Friend is entrusted with the key: When he opens none can shut, and when he shuts none can open. Hell, too, or the grave, is under his eye, and subject to his controul; and there he keeps the dust of his saints, till he open this secret chamber at his future coming, awake their sleeping ashes, after the peaceful slumbers of the long night of death, and adorn the re-animated frame with all the beauty of immortal youth, recommended by the still brighter charms of internal perfect holiness. Jesus lives and reigns for ever to make intercession for his people, and secure to them the precious fruits of his love; whence he says, "Because I live, ye shall live also." "I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom." What child of God need then dread the vale of death, where Jesus trod and lay before him, when he views it as a safe avenue to a Father's house; as the certain, the infallible path to unfading glory, to an immortal crown, and unbounded kingdom! If our doubts and fears for the present vanish, when admitted to enjoy communion with our Lord here below, and his ban-

ner.

ner over us is love; how must they cease for ever, when once we are set down in the upper house, at that table which shall not be drawn, and there admitted to eat and drink with him; to partake of the fruit of the Tree of Life, and refresh ourselves from that pure river which flows from the throne above through all the celestial Paradise, and makes glad, by its sacred streams, the city of our God! The solemn ordinance now before us is one of these refreshing streams, a precious well of salvation, whence we may draw water with joy; yet is, even in its richest entertainment, only a foretaste of what shall be enjoyed above. True it is, before we can ascend thither in our complete person, we must tread death's dreary path, and make our bed in his dark abode; yet even there shall we repose in hope; for, at the brightness of our Saviour's coming, this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal be clothed with immortality, when death shall be swallowed up of victory, and the grave divested of her prey. What though that event should separate us from those we now esteem and love in the Lord; yet can it not perpetuate our separation: for he holds the keys of death and the grave, and by his power and favour we shall meet again never more to part. What though we may seem forsaken and forgotten in the dark and narrow house, which is the long home of all living; yet shall it be only for a short season, and that in order to our being gathered together by him with everlasting mercies. Say then, ye believing few, if we may not survey our Lord's grave with joy, even in the prospect of making our future abode in the same drear and lonely dwelling? and if we have not now just cause to join mirth with our trembling, while

while we encompass his altar, and take our seat at his sacred board? To this effect sings one,

"With joy, with grief, that healing hand I see;

"The skies it form'd, and yet it bled for me."

5. Once more—The survey of our Redeemer's tomb should strengthen and confirm our purposes to live to his glory. Did he for our sake humble himself so low, and shall not the cords of his love, the constraining influence of his grace and condescension, powerfully draw us to the obedience of faith? His we are by the most endearing and indissoluble ties, and him we are sacredly bound to love and serve. He is the Father of our spirits, the framer of our bodies, the Redeemer of our souls, and the source of all we enjoy or can hope for, whether as men or Christians. While the wicked and impenitent give him reason to complain, "If I am a Father, where is mine honour? If I am a master, where is my fear?" let our hearts rejoin, "Yea, Lord, thou art 'a Father and a Master with whom none can compare, and as such we own ourselves thine, and bound 'to love, reverence, and serve thee.' Let us thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, that they who live should henceforth not live to themselves, but to his glory and praise who died for them and rose again. His work, how honourable! His reward, how glorious and munificent! His worship, so pure, simple, and rational, is neither costly nor laborious in its observance. His precepts are all holy, just, and good; and obedience to them calculated to promote not only the glory of God, but also the happiness of man, in every relation and circumstance in which he can be placed. Besides, our regard to these is recommended and enforced by the
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most powerful consideration, the peerless love of Jesus, which brought him from the throne to the manger, the cross, and the grave. Must we not then be utterly inexcusable if we do not love and serve him, not to say basely ungrateful? Do the servants of the great boast of the wealth, power, and dignity of their masters? and are they proud to serve them, and ambitious to secure their favour? And shall not we who are called by the name of Jesus, glory in him and in our relation to him, and be careful to shew to the world whose we are and whom we serve? that we deem it our highest honour, no less than indispensable duty, to devote our hearts to his love and our lives to his service? Love is the fulfilling of the law, the very essence of gospel holiness, without which there can be no true Christian obedience; and where that divine principle is implanted, it can not fail to produce and influence what I am now recommending. As Christ's love to his people bound him with cords to the horns of the altar, nailed his hands and feet to the accursed tree; so ours to him, if genuine, will constrain us to serve him without fear, and to walk in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life. On occasions of this nature should we remember our faults and failures in duty; accomplish a diligent search, and renew our repentance towards God, and our believing application to the atoning blood of Jesus. As we will find, on the slightest survey of our temper and conduct hitherto, many sins committed, many duties neglected, and the failures and defects even of our best services more than can be numbered; let us resolve, in humble dependence on Divine grace, that wherein we have done iniquity we will do so no more; that we shall hence-

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forth serve him only, and with our whole heart; and let it be one great object with us in going up to a communion table, to have this resolution strengthened and confirmed: "Herein (says our Lord) is "my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so "shall ye be my disciples;" that is, approve yourselves such. The glory of the Father and of Christ is one, and promoted by the very same means; and shall not his glory be dear to our souls, when our salvation was so precious in his eyes? Let every one that nameth the name of Jesus, by professing his religion and partaking of its sacred privileges, depart from all iniquity, both in love and practice; and abound in these works of faith and labours of love which are through him to the glory of the Father. We have been this day invited to survey, with devout regard, the place where the Lord once lay; with some of the important benefits which result from his descent thither, and are secured to his people by his revival thence; and are now called to view these scenes of unparalleled sufferings which paved the way to that event, as exhibited to the eye of faith in the solemn service in which we are so soon to be engaged. While we, therefore, attempt to survey, in the exercise of pious meditation, the dread catastrophe once exhibited on Calvary-hill, and visit, as invited by the angel who announced his resurrection to the women, the humble mansion where the illustrious sufferer once submitted to lie;—while we commemorate these sacredly interesting events at his holy table, let our grateful admiration be excited,—our repentance for sin kindled together,—our love to him enflamed, and our resolutions to serve him confirmed. To conclude,

Are

Are there present who seldom if ever sincerely attempt to comply with the invitation in the text, *Come, see the place where the Lord lay*;—present, on whom the lowly steps he took have never yet produced any corresponding effects? Waving the monstrous ingratitude of such conduct, and its atrocious guilt in the sight of God, I must assure you, my Friends, that to you, in your present state, the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ can afford no ground of comfort, no foundation of hope. To you, while under the guilt and power of sin, death is indeed a king of terrors, the grave a strong dungeon, and a future resurrection only a delivery thence in order to execution—in order to be “punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.” If this terrific king, who carries all of human race captive into his dark dominions, should overtake you in this miserable state, ye may adopt, each for himself, the emphatic words of David: “Because of the voice of the enemy, my heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me *.” That these terrors shall not be groundless in your case, appears from what he adds, “Thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction †.” While you refuse subjection to Jesus, the anointed King in Zion, and spurn his easy yoke, reflect for a moment who are the masters you serve, and what shall be your reward. The word of God being judge, and its verdict admitted, you serve sin, whose wages is death in all its awful import; the world, whose scanty reward will soon

* Psal. lv. 3. 4. 5. † Verse 23.

issue in disappointment and sorrow; Satan, who was a murderer from the beginning, and is in pursuit of your precious souls to devour them; and you sow to the flesh, of which, if God is not mocked, you must reap corruption. Break off all connection with such, and choose without delay whom you would serve in future, and abide by at death and for ever. Rest not your hopes for eternity on any thing short of an actual interest in the Son of God by faith, and a begun conformity to his image; for, believe it as a certain fact, every other ground of hope, to which men are so apt to trust, will prove in the hour of greatest need but refuges of lies, and a foundation of quicksand; on which whosoever builds, the superstructure, unable to sustain the shock of descending rains, swelling floods, and beating winds, will one day bury in its extensive ruins. Though you may now prosper in the world, possess health, ease, and friends, while adversity is unknown in your dwelling; yet remember the days of darkness, for they may be many, and not far distant. Beware of construing your present good things into so many infallible marks of the Divine favour, or of fondly promising yourselves that they shall be always continued. If such things were done in the green tree—done to the innocent Lamb of God; what shall be done to the dry—to obstinate sinners, who make themselves fit fuel for the flames of incensed wrath? God often, in the course of his providence, permits those to prosper for a while whom he means yet to afflict, or in the issue to destroy,—and their prosperity paves the way not unfrequently for this destruction. If the goodness of God lead not to repentance, it will render the guilt and punishment of those who abuse it the more aggravated and conspicuous

spicuous. Of such the pious king of Israel remarks, "Because they have no change, therefore they fear not God."—Strange return indeed! Justly might he prefix, "God shall hear, and afflict them, even he that abideth of old *." The margin reads it, "With whom there be no changes, yet they fear not God;" which marks their base ingratitude, taking occasion from the uninterrupted series of prosperity in their lot, to cast off the fear and neglect the worship of its Author.

Neither will your privileges, as professing Christians, however inestimable these are in themselves, nor even the duties you may perform, secure you from the just but fatal effects of sin; and therefore rely not on either as a ground of hope. You may now bear the name of Christ, assemble before him statedly as his people, and, on occasions like this, even take your seat at his holy table; yet all this, so long as ye refuse him the love and government of the heart, and the unreserved obedience of the life, will only enhance your guilt, and, of course, that misery to which it exposes. Hear his own declaration to this purpose, "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven." Did God not spare his Son, when we stood in need of a saviour?—spare him when he substituted himself in the room of the guilty, but delivered him up to the death, taking at the same time an active part in bruising him and putting him to grief? Is he now so far from sparing him, in the dispensation of the gospel, that he beseeches and en-

* Psal. lv. 19.

treats sinners to accept of him, with all his precious benefits, to the salvation of their souls, and authorizes his servants to persuade them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God? and can you once surmise, my Friends, that such love and goodness merit no regard, deserve no returns of love, praise, and gratitude on your part? Shall his blood, with respect to you, be shed in vain? Are you content to trample it under foot as an unholy thing, or to rush through its crimson torrent into the pit of woe? Will you crucify the Son of God afresh, by your continued refusal of his grace, abuse of his patience, and neglect of his great salvation? and so say, with the blinded Jews of old, "Away with him, away with him; crucify him, crucify him; not this man, but Barabbas!" — "We have loved strangers, and after them will we go!" Will ye give us reason to complain to him that sent us, Lord, we have spoke to this people in thy name, declared to them thy word, and entreated them, by every argument and motive we could conceive, to be reconciled to thee; and yet they would not believe our report, nor receive thy Son to rule and save them? Will you force us to bring in our unwilling testimony against you another day,—that life and death, the blessing and the curse have been set before you, but that you chose death? Should you still persist in disobeying the gospel, what shall the end of all this be? The want of love to Jesus, who has every possible claim to the supreme affection of our heart, is not such a trivial matter as many seem to imagine. Hear the Apostle's solemn declaration, all ye who love him not, and let your heart quake for fear of his judgment: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-

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ran-atha; as much as to say, Let him be accursed, or remain a victim devoted to destruction, till the Lord himself come to execute just vengeance upon him. These are not words of course, or the expression of a resentful disposition; for they were inspired by the Spirit of God, and proceeded from a heart penetrated with such tender love to precious souls, as led the holy man of God to travail as in birth till Christ should be formed in them the hope of glory. They shall therefore be infallibly fulfilled in their season, where mercy from God and unfeigned repentance towards him prevent not. Till you have obtained the one, and are enabled by grace to exercise the other, presume not, upon pain of his highest displeasure, to approach a communion table.

That the above solemn declaration may not be verified on you, in all its awful import, "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:"—"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;" looking up by faith and prayer to that God whose province it is to "work in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Meditate on the Saviour's death, with all its solemn circumstances and deeply-interesting consequences, as recorded in the inspired page, till your love and gratitude are excited into lively exercise; till your filial sorrow and repentings for sin, with a rooted hatred of it, are kindled together, and your purposes of new obedience enforced and confirmed. Come frequently to the place where the Lord lay, to learn there such important lessons as have been suggested from the subject, that, by his Spirit, corresponding dispositions may be implanted and cherished in your hearts. If it is given you in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe

believe on his name, but also to be willing to suffer for his sake, should he please to call to this, you may assure yourselves that his gracious presence will attend you through life, and command your rest beyond it,—that it shall be well with you in time, and for ever. Then will he make you cordially welcome to his banqueting-house, where he spreads a banner of love over his highly-favoured guests, and invites to partake of his Supper: “Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.” Commit the care of your souls to Jesus in well-doing, with whom the Father hath entrusted the keys of death and the grave, yea, all the concerns of his own glory, fully persuaded he is both able and willing to keep the precious deposit against that day; and he will guide you by his counsel through life, support you by his gracious presence in trouble and death, and re-unite your immortal spirits at his second appearance with their material organized frame, then rescued from the power and dominion of death and the grave. Thus shall your corruptible part put on incorruption, and being fashioned after the bright resemblance of his own glorified body, be clothed with immortality, while the whole man shall be completely blessed in all the perfection and glory of a happy eternity. Blessed Jesus, how boundless thy love! how inexhaustibly rich thy mercy! and immense the treasures of thy grace, which can raise guilty rebels to the possession of a happiness so glorious and everlasting! This Jesus now embrace, as made of God unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; and then shall there be joy in heaven over you, joy in the presence of the angels of God. Cleave to him with full purpose of heart; be followers of him as dear children through good report

report and bad report; and then may you say, with these once imperfect, tempted, and afflicted, but now glorified saints, "We know that our Redeemer liveth, "and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the "earth." We know that though the earthly house of this tabernacle must be dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. All those who fall asleep in Jesus will God bring from the dust of death, to reign in bliss and glory with him for ever and ever. All this his power makes possible, and his word clearly ascertains; and why then should it appear to any incredible?— May the Lord himself enable you, and all who may this day approach his holy table, so to contemplate the place where he once lay, that we may be soon brought to that place where he now lives and reigns for ever, and there be admitted to see his face, and share his unvailed glory, through ages never to waste. *Amen.*

ESSAYS

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ESSAYS IN POETRY.

VERSIONS AND PARAPHRASES OF SOME OF THE PSALMS.

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PSALM XXIII.—*In imitation of ADDISON'S.*

- 1 JESUS my pasture will prepare,
There feed me with unceasing care;
My ev'ry want will he supply,
And guide my feet with watchful eye:
Where'er I go he'll sure attend,
And day and night from ill defend.
- 2 What time 'midst barren wilds I stray,
Or devious paths have lost my way,
My erring steps he forthwith leads
To verdant fields and flow'ry meads,
By purest streams which ever flow,
Yet in their progress soft and flow.
- 3 Amid the pleasant landscape he
Will still conduct and cherish me:
From him is the refreshing draught
Which with new life and health is fraught;
And in his presence all looks gay—
Yea, night itself bright as noon-day.

- 4 Is it decreed that all must die,—
Both poor and rich, both low and high?
And does death prove a dreary vale,
Where fears and terrors oft prevail?
While our insidious hellish foes,
In that dark vale their force oppose:
- 5 Yet tho' in that dark vale I tread,
With death's dread horrors round me spread,
Trusting in God, I'll fear no ill,
Who shall ev'n there be with me still—
And by his staff and rod me aid,
And guide quite thro' the gloomy shade.
- 6 While in this lonely wild I stay,
Where storms well nigh blot out the day,
His bounty shall still load my board,
And what is good in store afford;
Yea, in the presence of my foes,
Who his decree can not oppose.
- 7 Tho' these with malice may assail,
And nights of sorrow oft prevail,
Yet with fresh oil shall he bedew
My head, and thus felt joy renew;
While goodness shall me still attend,
And in his mercy my life end.
- 8 When death dissolves the vital tie,
His hand shall waft my soul on high,
Pure and refin'd from sin and sense,
As if array'd with innocence;
And thus made meet to dwell with God,
Shall share for aye his blest'd abode.

The same in the form of an ODE.

I.

JESUS the Lord,
By all be ador'd,
He is my Shepherd—can I want?
He'll still provide,
Me lead and guide,
And what is needful daily grant.

II.

In pastures green
Where streams are seen,
Which glide these pastures gently by,
This Shepherd feeds
His flock, and leads,
And o'er each keeps a watchful eye.

III.

Amid this scene,
Where pleasures reign,
He makes me feed, and quietly rest:
The streams which flow,
So pure and flow,
Delight mine eye, regale my taste.

IV.

In death's dark vale,
Where fears prevail,
Tho' I should tread, I'll fear no ill;
His staff will bear,
And rod thro' steer
My steps, and he'll be with me still.

V.

Oft as I stray
From the right way

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ESSAYS IN POETRY.

My erring feet doth he reclaim;
 In paths of grace,
 Of truth and peace
 He makes me walk, for his own name.

VI.

Before my foes,
 Who me oppose,
 My table doth he richly spread;
 So full my store
 My cup runs o'er;
 He oil of joy sheds on my head.

VII.

His goodness shall
 Attend his all,
 And tender mercies crown their days;
 Then their abode
 Shall be with God,
 Where they for ever sing his praise.

VIII.

All this I know
 To me he'll show
 In time and thro' unbounded space;
 What's good will give
 While here I live,
 Then raise to dwell before his face.

PSALM XXIX.

1 YE great and noble of the earth,
 Yea, all who boast of royal birth,
 And who in power and wealth excel,
 God's mighty works in praises tell.

2 To him ascribe unbounded might,
 Who reigns as King in glorious light,

And

- And at his footstool humbly bow,
To pay that homage which is due.
- 3 Let holiness be still your aim,
While you adore his holy name;
And with glad hearts your voices raise
To join all nature in his praise.
- 4 The pregnant clouds his voice quick hear—
A voice so dread who can but fear?
These clouds discharge their copious store,
While lightnings blaze and thunders roar.
- 5 All nature feels the awful sound,
Which spreads its terrors all around;
While millions tremble at the noise,
And own it God's tremendous voice.
- 6 The wat'ry world is made to feel,
Yea rocks and hills on base to reel;
He speaks, and storms of wind and hail
That spacious element assail.
- 7 What pow'r does in this voice appear,
Which can throughout tall cedars tear!
Whose tow'ring boughs bestrew the ground;
While, like fleet harts, the hills all bound!
- 8 This pow'rful, this majestic sound,
Lays woods and forests bare around;
While trees and rocks asunder break,
Th' extended desert's made to quake.
- 9 If God his voice in thunder sends,
Kadesh in homage lowly bends;
From bursting clouds the lightnings fly,
That dread artill'ry of the sky.

- 10 This voice, while it leaves coverts bare,
Rends rocks, and firmest trees doth tear;
Makes timid hinds to cast their young,
And beasts, thro' dread, to thickets throng.
- 11 Yet those who to his courts resort,
May worship there secure from hurt;
Relate his deeds of glorious fame,
And join in praises to his name.
- 12 Tho' floods should swell, and thunders roar,
And angry heav'n emit its store;
Yet God still rules supreme o'er these,
And shall o'er all to endless days.
- 13 Their strength in season he'll supply,
To guard from danger be still nigh;
Them bless with grace and constant peace,
And soon with glory, ne'er to cease.

PSALM L.

- 1 **T**HE Lord from heav'n of heav'ns shall come,
To summon mankind to their doom;
To call the wide creation round
By the last trump's alarming sound!
- 2 In solemn pomp will he appear,
And as a robe his glory wear;
While all the bright celestial hosts,
Like suns, adorn the azure coasts.
- 3 Tempests and flames around him wait,
As his dread ministers of state;
While peals of thunder rend the sky,
And sheets of vivid lightning fly!

- 4 He abus'd silence keeps no more,
His voice is in the thunder's roar,—
A voice which reaches nature's round,
And carries terror in its sound.
- 5 From rising sun to western sky
He bids earth's num'rous tribes draw nigh—
Each of our race, to take his stand
On the great Judge's either hand.
- 6 While sons of earth start from the tomb,
Expecting their impending doom;
The Judge invites the heirs of grace,
Each on his right to take his place.
- 7 ' My faints,' th' Almighty Saviour cries,
' Whose hopes rest on my sacrifice,
' Who have obtained peace with God,
' Through my once-shed atoning blood,
- 8 ' Assemble here before my face,
' And own salvation all of grace;
' Let conscious Heav'n this day confess
' Your works of love and righteousness.
- 9 ' Let Heav'n too own that sentence just,
' Which dooms each rebel, as accurs'd,
' To regions of immortal woe,
' Where wrath's dread torrents ceaseless flow.
- 10 ' Let this great day proclaim abroad
' That I am the incarnate God;
' Its acts declare me all divine,
' While each perfection in them shine.
- 11 ' Such is your Judge, ye rebel men,
' Attend while I you all arraign,

- ' And set your sins in dread array,
 ' Before the piercing eye of day.
- 12 ' Isra'l's accuser I appear,
 ' O ! Abr'am's seed, now lend an ear,
 ' Who trust in rites and victims slain,
 ' Which without faith and love are vain.
- 13 ' Your Maker and your God am I,
 ' Yet do I not now testify
 ' Against you for oblations few,
 ' Tho' these were still of right my due.
- 14 ' Mine are the herds which graze the field,
 ' Yea, all the beasts that mountains yield ;
 ' I claim the cattle all as mine—
 ' Nor need I seek from folds of thine.
- 15 ' The fowls which cleave the yielding air,
 ' Are still the objects of my care ;
 ' Yea, all the creatures of the earth
 ' Derive from me their frame and birth.
- 16 ' Should I, for once, then need supply,
 ' Would I, to needy man apply ?
 ' Whose is the earth, with all its store,
 ' And could, with ease, frame millions more !
- 17 ' If victims on my altar slain,
 ' Are unavailing thus, and vain ;
 ' Sure no less so each lifeless form
 ' Which all base hypocrites perform.
- 18 ' What I require is faith and love,
 ' With fruits which these still genuine prove ;
 ' To pay your vows and offer praise,
 ' Is more than rites or sacrifice.
- 19 ' Who.

- 19 ' Who in each trouble trust in me,
' Call on my name, me glorify,
' Such sure shall still deliv'rance find,
' And in their Judge discern their Friend.
- 20 ' But all vile hypocrites I warn;
' Whose piety, a specious form;
' How dare ye once assume my name;
' While you a brother can defame?
- 21 ' Inur'd to falsehood and deceit;
' You often flatter whom you hate;
' Despise th' instructions of my word,
' And treat as false my firm record.
- 22 ' How dare ye seek th' Almighty's face?
' Who break his law, abuse his grace;—
' Dare name my cov'nant with your tongue?
' While prone to do your neighbour wrong.
- 23 ' With thieves, and framers of deceit,
' Whom my soul utterly doth hate;
' With the impure, and persons vile
' Whose words and practices defile;
- 24 ' With these you joined have in sin,
' And in their crimes associates been;
' While, with loose reins, your lips defame
' Your very friend and brother's name.
- 25 ' These works of darkness I have seen,
' Tho' I forbore and silent been;
' Whence hope sprung of impunity,
' As if I did with you agree.
- 26 ' But I will sure at length chastise,
' Set all your sins before your eyes—

' Your

‘ Your guilt, and that deserved woe
 ‘ Which shall unceasing from it flow.’

- 27 Lay this to heart, ye sons of vice,
 Who now can spurn renewing grace;
 Neglect to call on God by pray’r
 And make religion your chief care.
- 28 Lay this to heart, the Judge is near,
 Who, lion-like, his foes shall tear;
 For in that dread decisive hour
 None can deliver from his pow’r.
- 29 To his kind counsels now attend,
 And at his footstool humbly bend;
 Let his praise still employ your tongue,
 And his salvation be your song.
- 30 The man who God aright doth praise,
 His law observes, walks in his ways;
 Him as a friend will Jesus own,
 And make salvation to him known.

PSALM C.

I.

WITH cheerful voice
 Come and rejoice,
 Ye people all before your King;
 His name adore,
 His grace implore,
 As Salem’s God his praises daily sing.

II.

With joy resort
 To Zion’s court,

Him

Him there extol in grateful song ;
 Glad homage pay,
 Still own his sway,
 And in his praise unite both heart and tongue.

III.

Him know and own
 As God alone,
 Who made us, and our all doth give ;
 His sure we are,
 Sheep of his care
 That in his pastures daily feed and live.

IV.

In songs of joy
 Your hours employ,
 Oft as ye meet in his abode—
 There bless his name,
 His deeds proclaim,
 Of grace and nature hail him King and God.

V.

Firm as a rock,
 What he hath spoke
 Shall unrevok'd for aye endure ;
 He's good and great,
 In bliss complete,
 His truth and mercy are for ever sure.

PSALM CXXI.

I TO the everlasting hills,
 On which Jehovah dwells,
 Still lift my longing waiting eyes ;
 For he my hope fulfils.

2 Both heaven and earth do owe their frame
To his Almighty hand ;
And shall he not for Zion's tow'r
Deliverance command ?

3 He, as my Guardian, ever keeps
O'er me his watchful eye ;
And to support my feeble steps
Himself is ever nigh.

4 My soul, compose thyself to rest,
Secure beneath his wing ;
For he o'er Israel still doth watch—
Their Shepherd and their King.

5 No scorching sun, no adverse moon,
Shall e'er my peace destroy ;
For God his pow'r by night and day
To guard me will employ.

6 Himself my shield, my mighty Lord
Defend will from all harm,
And still protect from every foe
By his Almighty arm.

7 At home, abroad, in peace and war,
He all my steps will guard ;
Henceforth preserve from sin and woe,
And prove my great reward.

8 My soul, rejoice in Israel's King,
Who still his name should praise ;
For he on earth salvation sends,
And soon to heav'n will raise.

PSALM CXXVI.

1 WHEN our God Zion brought from thrall
It seem'd to us a pleasing dream;
When he our bondage did recall
His praise compos'd our joyful theme.

2 The change so great, we scarce believe;
The welcome news our tongues employ;
We now forget to weep and grieve,
Yea break forth in loud shouts of joy.

3 Our Heathen neighbours saw, and own'd
Our God for us had wonders wrought;
Sure we should say, the Lord hath crown'd
His work, whence joy to us is brought.

4 Were these constrain'd thus to confess
It was our God us freed from thrall?
And shall not we who share this grace,
Extol his name, and on him call?

5 Yet let us fear, amidst our mirth,
And have it as our ardent pray'r,
That he would turn away his wrath,
O'er Jacob's seed maintain his care.

6 As flowing streams in parched land
May God our ancient state restore,
Complete deliv'rance soon command—
Our gloomy night of sorrows o'er.

7 Not so refreshing dews and rains,
Or rivers in a weary land,
As our release from slavish pains,
Which is now wrought by his own hand.

8 That

- 8 That seed which is now sown in tears,
 With deep concern and fervent pray'r,
 A rich increase in season bears
 To pay the owner's pious care.
- 9 The man who trusts this to the field,
 Depending on a gracious God,
 Will shout for joy to see it yield
 Of sheaves, in course, a welcome load.
- 10 Who leaves with God a seed of tears,
 Tho' it may long not seem to grow;
 Yet will he disappoint his fears,
 And make his joys like streams to flow.

PSALM CXXVII.

- 1 UNLESS the Lord the house will build,
 How fruitless all the builder's pain!
 Unless the Lord the city shield,
 The guards are set to watch in vain.
- 2 In vain ere dawn of day we rise,
 At latest hours to rest repair;
 For God pours sleep on lov'd ones eyes,
 Tho' strangers unto half this care.
- 3 Pow'r to get wealth, 'tis he bestows,
 'Tis he our pains crowns with success;
 His is the gift of sweet repose
 To men, yea to each heir of grace.
- 4 Children are presents from the Lord,
 These pledges of our nuptial love;
 If such, or friends, do joy afford,
 Let us still own 'tis from above.

- 5 As arrows in a strong man's hand,
When call'd to meet the foe in war;
So sons form a domestic band,
By whom their parents guarded are.
- 6 How blest the man whose quiver's stor'd
With such bright polish'd missive arms;
From danger these defence afford
'Midst scenes of war and its alarms.
- 7 Thrice blest'd is he to whom God sends,
As proofs and marks of his own love,
A gracious offspring, loving friends;
For then do such a blessing prove.

PSALM CXCVIII.—*Paraphrased and Applied.*

HOW truly blest who God do fear!
His pow'r still own and laws revere.
Thrice happy man, ordain'd to share
Thy Maker's never-ceasing care.
Secure from want, thou still shalt stand 5
Bless'd with the labour of thy hand.
The object of thy nuptial love,
Like a rich vine shall fruitful prove,
Whose boughs and leaves, widely display'd,
Form round thy house a friendly shade; 10
Mean-while, like olive branches fair,
Dear pledges of your mutual care
Shall grace thy board, while joys o'erflow
Which parents' hearts alone can know.
Such blessings will God here provide, 15
For him who makes his word his guide.
Most happy man, from Zion's tow'r
The choicest gifts he'll on thee show'r.
Thus blest'd, thou to thy latest day
Shalt Salem's peaceful state survey. 20

O o

With

With growing joy thy aged eyes
 Shall see thy children's children rise ;
 While peace her placid wings expand,
 With healing o'er thy native land.

Such is the man who fears the Lord, 25
 And still regards his gracious word ;
 Sees the Church prosper with his eyes,
 And sons and daughters fair arise ;
 Sees his own progeny increase,
 And lives and dies in truest peace. 30
 He, still more blest'd, to heav'n shall rise,
 And see the Church above the skies,
 Made her Lord's triumphs there to share,
 And still enjoy his special care.
 This fruitful Mother's favour'd race, 35
 In heav'n behold their Father's face ;
 Like olive plants around his board,
 They feast with their Almighty Lord ;
 Each shares the treasures of his love,
 And drinks of pleasure's streams above— 40
 Completely blest'd, with him they stand,
 And reap the labour of their hand.

How blest'd the man who God then fears !
 Still owns his sway, his laws reveres ;
 And who is thus ordain'd to share 45
 His Saviour's unremitting care—
 To reign with him in bliss above,
 For aye solac'd with fruits of love !

PSALM CXXXVII.

BENEATH a melancholy shade,
 Near by Euphrates' swelling stream,
 Our weary limbs to rest we laid,
 While Zion was our doleful theme.

2 There

- 2 There did we pass the tedious day
In tears, with sorrows deep deprest;
While hope scarce lent one cheering ray,
To lull our mournful cares to rest.
- 3 Our silent harps, ah! now unstrung,
Which oft were tun'd in sacred praise,
On willow trees neglected hung,
Not once employ'd in Zion's lays.
- 4 No more their wonted part they bear,
In solemn concert to her King;
How can we check the flowing tear,
When we essay his praise to sing!
- 5 Mean-while our proud imperious lords,
Who forc'd us from our native seat,
Fast bound with chains and slavish cords,
Would have us Zion's song repeat.
- 6 In cruel scorn to us they cry,
While insults fresh enhance our wrongs,
"Ye captive Hebrews, now draw nigh,
"And sing us one of Zion's songs."
- 7 Can hearts with grief and woe oppress'd,
Give way to joy and festive lays;
Remote from that sweet land of rest,
In which we dwelt in better days?
- 8 How shall we tune our harps to sing
Jehovah's praise, with skilful hands?
Can songs of joy to Salem's King
Employ our lips in foreign lands?
- 9 O Salem! once the happy place,
Where oft we met on solemn days;

Of too, with joy, beheld his face,
And join'd to celebrate his praise.

10 Tho' now in bondage to our foes,
For our accumulated guilt,
Which doth to all these woes expose,
And our dear brethren's * blood hath spilt.

11 Yet, if we can thy courts forget,
Or of thy rites unmindful prove,
Let skill from our right hand depart,
And our lips sealed cease to move.

12 While thou in fable weeds dost sit,
And desolation spreads her wing
O'er thy once famous regal seat,
How can we but refuse to sing?

13 To us thy glory and thy fame,
Are dearer far than earthly joys;
Our hearts melt at thy very name,
Which we repeat with mournful voice.

14 Tho' now we weep, while foes exult
With cruel pleasure in our woes;
And thence increase their wild insult—
Yet brighter scenes will sure disclose.

15 Forget not, Lord, how Edom's race,
In Zion's former fatal day,
Exclaim'd, "Her bulwarks all craze,
"And with the ground her level lay."

16 Thou Babel, which now sit'st in state,
And spread'st thy conquests far and wide,

* Those who were slain in the war with the Chaldeans, by whom they were carried away captive.

Shalt soon meet with a fearful fate—
When wrath invades thee like a tide.

17 Thy haughty daughters doom'd to be
Of deep destruction then the prey;
Thrice blest the man who shall to thee,
Our wrongs and mis'ries all repay.

18 Then shall God's praise employ our tongue,
When captive Zion he sets free;
And thus makes her once more our song—
Her coasts a land of liberty.

The same in the form of an ODE.

I.

BENEATH a shade,
Now awful made
By deep distress and grievous woe,
We laid us down
To weep and moan,
While Babel's streams did by us flow.

II.

Our mournful theme
Was fair Salem,
Now all in blended ruins laid;
Our harps unstrung,
Neglected hung
On trees which form'd that gloomy shade.

III.

Our harps, ah! cease
To sound God's praise;
Nor can the smallest comfort bring,
When we recall
Our present thrall,
And former state would try to sing.

ESSAYS IN POETRY.

IV.

Tho' deep deprest,
 And sore distrest,
 Our foes demand a Zion's song;
 But can we praise,
 In joyful lays,
 Our God with either harp or tongue?

V.

Could we forget
 Thy present state,
 O Zion, the once-happy place
 Where we oft sung,
 With harp and tongue
 Jehovah's praise, and saw his face.

VI.

May our right hand
 Lose its command,
 And our lips cease at once to move,
 If we prize not
 That sacred spot,
 Earth's joys and treasures far above.

VII.

To us thy fame
 And very name,
 Have charms which these by far excel;
 But, ah! now fled,
 Or vail'd with shade.—
 Oh, shall we in thy courts yet dwell!

VIII.

Tho' we now weep,
 By night scarce sleep,

While

While sorrow nigh blots out the day ;
 Yet we still hope
 Bright scenes will ope,
 Which shall inspire a joyful lay.

IX.

Recall to mind,
 Friend of mankind,
 How, 'midst our woes, proud Edom's race
 Exclaim'd in rage,
 Let us engage,
 And Zion's tow'rs and domes efface.

X.

Proud Babel's fate,
 Tho' now in state,
 Will soon, like ours, be very low ;—
 Her pow'r and name,
 And wide-spread fame,
 When wrath's dread torrents on her flow.

XI.

Unto her sons,
 Yea proudest ones,
 Will God our mis'ries yet repay—
 Plead his own cause
 And injur'd laws,
 When she in turn becomes a prey.

XII.

Thrice blessed he
 Who shall this see,
 And bear therein an active part ;
 See Zion own'd
 Of God, and crown'd
 With safety, which makes glad the heart.

XIII.

XIII.

Then harp and tongue
 Will join in song,
 To celebrate this grand event;
 To bless his name,
 And spread his fame,
 Who from on high deliv'rance sent.

PSALM CXXXIX.

IN vain, my God, in vain I try
 T' elude thine all-pervading eye,
 Who, at one comprehensive view,
 Dost look the whole creation through:
 The very rudiments of thought,
 As yet not to perfection brought,
 Thou seest, great Author of my frame,
 Long ere I can give them a name.
 My ev'ry path to thee is known,
 Nor can I ever be alone;
 For thou, my God, art ever near—
 Nor foe nor danger need I fear;
 Whence solitude wears charms to me,
 If there I find myself and thee.
 My paths by day dost thou attend,
 And all my hours by night defend;
 Thou round my bed a guard dost keep,
 With watchful eyes, while I'm asleep.
 My words, ere form'd, are heard by thee;
 'Tis vain to hope for secrecy;
 For no where sure can I be found,
 But me thine essence will surround.
 Too high such knowledge is to find,
 It far exceeds my pow'rs of mind;
 For who can scan thy nature, Lord,
 This abyfs sound with reason's cord.

O! whither

ESSAYS IN POETRY.

411

O! whither then can I once fly
T' escape thine all-discerning-eye?
From which a guilty conscious mind
Can sure no where a refuge find. 30
Should I ascend beyond the sky,
Where thou art seen in majesty;
Or visit the abyfs of woe,
Where thou art felt a present foe;
Should I, on rapid wings of light, 35
To climes remote direct my flight,
Ev'n there o'ertake me would thy hand,
Which can extend o'er sea and land.
Should I once dream t' evade thy sight
Under the gloom and shade of night, 40
Thou would'st, with one refulgent ray,
Convert its darkeft gloom to day;
For light and shade to thee are one,
Who hast in glory fix'd thy throne;
Nor can one finger from thy sight 45
Be hid 'midst gloom and shades of night.
The frame and texture of my heart
Thou fully know'st in ev'ry part;
For thine own hands did fashion me,
Thine eyes the process did o'ersee; 50
Thyself the springs of life did'st give,
Yea 'tis in thee I move and live.
Can I then but assume the lyre,
Oft as I to this cell retire?
Can I survey my curious frame 55
Replete with wonders without name,
And not revere its Author, God,
Who rear'd the fabric by his word?
In that frail frame do wonders shine
Which speaks a skill, O how divine!! 60

Then

Then let the tribute of due praise
 Ascend to heav'n in grateful lays,
 While I to God devote my days, &c.

PSALM CXLVIII.—*In the form of an ODE.*

I.

COME, praise the Lord,
 At whose dread word
 Both heav'n and earth assum'd their frame;
 Ye heavens high
 And azure sky
 Declare the glories of his name.

II.

Ye Seraphims
 And Cherubims,
 Him to extol your voices raise;
 Thou moon by night,
 And sun so bright,
 With all the starry host him praise.

III.

Ye orbs that roll
 From pole to pole,
 And clouds which float in liquid air;
 Still own his sway,
 Your homage pay,
 His pow'r and wisdom still declare.

IV.

Ye wat'ry clouds
 And rolling floods,
 With all the bright realms above,
 Proclaim that Lord
 Who hath you stor'd
 With hosts which at his word still move.

V.

At his command
You firm did stand,
And rose to being at his word;
By his decree
From change you're free—
Then own him as your Sovereign Lord.

VI.

By his own breath
He form'd the earth,
With its most num'rous tenants all;
He clothes the field,
And bids it yield
Food for all creatures great and small.

VII.

Let earth obey,
Its tribute pay
To him who reigns supreme o'er all;
And still let men
Own his domain,
And at his footstool humbly fall.

VIII.

Ye tribes of deep
Which swim or creep,
Ye fish, and whales of monstrous size,
That sport and play,
Remote from day,
In homage lift to God your eyes.

IX.

Fire, hail, and snow,
With winds that blow,

And

And carry vengeance on their wing;
 Or, without harm
 Give us alarm,
 To nature's Monarch tribute bring.

X.

While thunders roar,
 Let men adore
 That God whose voice can rend the sky;
 Revere his name,
 Still own his claim,
 And to his mercy quickly fly.

XI.

Ye mountains high
 And vallies nigh,
 With cedars each, and stately pine,
 And trees of fruit,
 Which strength recruit,
 The hand that plants you own divine.

XII.

Each creeping thing
 And bird of wing,
 With beasts that range the forest wide,
 Both wild and tame,
 Own that great name
 Who 'gainst your each want doth provide.

XIII.

Each crowned head,
 Who nations lead,
 With judges of a humbler name,
 Your tribute bring
 To this great King,
 And his due honours still proclaim.

XIV.

XIV.

Both old and young
Him praise in song,
Youth of each sex, and fathers all;
His deeds rehearse
In joyful verse,
And in this join ye children small.

XV.

His glorious name
Exceeds all fame,
And merits everlasting praise;
Sure then our song,
With ev'ry tongue,
Should all unite that name to raise.

XVI.

Still own his sway,
His word obey,
Ye nations in earth's utmost ends;
Ye heirs of grace
Your God still praise;
For this your efforts all transcend.

XVII.

Let Isra'l's race
Proclaim his grace,
Still in a joyful grateful song;
For you are near,
A people dear,
Who shall his praise for aye prolong.

PSALM CL.

I O PRAISE the Lord in Zion's gate,
Ye ministers who on him wait;

P p

Praise

Praise him who dwells above the sky,
Supreme in glorious Majesty.

- 2 He there unvail'd his glory shows,
And thence in streams his goodness flows;
In that thrice glorious happy place
Angels and saints behold his face.
- 3 Extol his name for all his deeds,
Their praise our highest flights exceeds—
His mighty deeds of matchless fame
Still shew the wonders of that name.
- 4 Let the shrill trump his praise resound,
And hills and plains that praise rebound;
With tuneful harps still sound his praise,
And with each instrument it raise.
- 5 Let virgin choirs the timbrel bring,
With psalt'ry sweet, of various string,
And organs join'd, his praise advance,
While some express it in the dance.
- 6 Let such as sacred hymns prepare
In the sweet concert bear their share;
To th' organ set their joyful songs,
And in his praise employ their tongues.
- 7 Let cymbals sound his grateful praise,
As on our solemn festive days;
And thus let soul, and voice, and art,
Bear in this melody their part.
- 8 Let all that draw the vital breath,
Whether in sea, in air, or earth,
Their pow'rs to praise that God employ,
Who gives them all things to enjoy.

ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

Come, see the place where the LORD lay.—Mat. xxviii. 6.

1 THE pious fair by dawn repair
To their Lord's tomb in tears,
T' embalm his corse, drawn by love's force—
Love which surmounts all fears.

2 As they drew nigh, lo, there they spy
Bright forms, who forthwith said,
“Dry up your tears, and banish fears”—
For they were fore afraid.

3 “Here he is not; come view the spot;”
For lately he arose—
Arose to reign o'er God's domain,
And conquer all his foes.

4 This humble cell where he did dwell,
With admiration view;
Adore the grace you here may trace,
And still the theme renew.

5 Late here he lay, bright source of day,
Yet lies now here no more;
Rose, as he said, with light array'd—
The sacred spot explore.

6 Here him now cry, “Behold! 'tis I
“Who once did groan and die;
“But now I live, and shall survive
“Time's date, and reign on high.”

- 7 My soul, survey where Jesus lay,
That Sovereign mighty Lord ;
He made his bed among the dead,
While angels him ador'd.
- 8 He died for men, 'midst grief and pain,
A victim on the tree ;
From Mary's womb to the dark tomb,
The Man of Grief we see.
- 9 When kings of earth resign their breath,
And make the grave their home,
It is but dust to native dust,
Submitting to their doom.
- 10 In Christ we spy of earth and sky
The Maker and the Lord ;
Yet there he lay, shut up from day—
Brought low by Justice' sword.
- 11 Low as he lay, first-born of day
The dreary mansion tread ;
Their robes of light dispel the night,
Shed odours round his head.
- 12 The loathsome tomb, that narrow room,
Thereby did he perfume ;—
Tho' *his* must die, in this room lie,
And there to dust consume :
- 13 Yet as he rose, quell'd all his foes,
To share immortal joy ;
From hence he'll bring, and cause them sing
'Midst pleasures which ne'er cloy.
- 14 My soul, survey this Orb of day
O'ercast with darkest night ;

Survey his rise in eastern skies,
Array'd with glorious light.

15 His progress trace to that blest place
Where he full-orb'd appears;
His race now run, this peerless Sun
As robes his glory wears.

16 The tomb and throne do Jesus own
Their tenant and their Lord;
Both these declare his love and care—
Him God to be ador'd.

17 Trill man must die, like vapours fly—
Nor can his span prolong;
We die apace, resign our place—
Our life a tale, or song.

18 We soon recount the short amount
Of our each day and year—
Scarce seen begun, when they are run,
And wholly disappear.

19 Yet shall we live, time's date survive,
And reign with God above,
Where death or pain shall not once reign—
Blest in Emmanuel's love.

20 Our ravish'd eyes, beyond the skies,
Shall then behold our God
Array'd so bright with robes of light—
When we'll share his abode.

21 Yet shall we view, with joys still new,
The sacred humble spot
Where Christ once lay, bright Orb of day—
Which can ne'er be forgot.

- 22 This tribute own, all-gracious One,
 To whom our all we owe;
 Let all our ways shew forth thy praise,
 And gratitude still grow.

*The improvement we should make of CHRIST'S DEATH
 exemplified.*

- 1 **H**ATH God sent down his Son to die?
 And shall he not his grace impart?
 Did Jesus bleed for such as I?
 And will he not renew my heart?
- 2 Yes, sure, he hath his Son bestow'd,
 To ransom me from sin and hell;
 I therefore own him as my Lord,
 Assur'd he'll all my foes soon quell.
- 3 Did Christ once shed his precious blood,
 To wash my garments fair and clean?
 And shall I not concur with God
 To mortify my ev'ry sin?
- 4 Yes, Jesus bled once on the cross,
 And pour'd his soul out amid pains;
 Thus to repair my ev'ry loss,
 And purge my soul from sin's deep stains.
- 5 Then let me strive with all my power,
 Each day to conflict with my sin,
 That it pollute my soul no more;
 And thus keep heart and conscience clean.
- 6 Did Christ sustain a mighty load,
 And that for such a wretch as me?
 Did he once feel his Father's rod,
 And bear his wrath upon the tree?

- 7 Shall I then spurn his friendly rod,
Who bore the heaviest load for me?—
Spurn the correction of my God,
When I see Christ nail'd to the tree?
- 8 Did my Lord conquer by his death—
Crush Satan's empire while he fell?
Did he with hope resign his breath,
And spoil the mighty pow'rs of hell?
- 9 Yes, sure, he vanquish'd by his death;
For when he fell he struck that blow
Which Satan's kingdom felt on earth,
While all hell's pow'rs did mourn below.
- 10 Why then once dread my dying day—
Fear to surrender my last breath?
Since Jesus took the curse away,
And gives to triumph over death.
- 11 Taught by my Lord, in that dread hour
My soul to him would I commit,
In hope to conquer by his pow'r,
And in his mansions pure to sit.
- 12 Then let me rather wish to die,
And see my Lord who dy'd for me—
Wish to get loose from sin, and fly
To him, and ever with him be.
- 13 What joy to see his glory there,
And praise, in grateful strains, his love!—
What joy to contribute my share
Among the ransom'd tribes above!
- 14 All sacred honours to the Son,
Who bled and died to purchase peace;

Our

Our souls to ransom with his own,
And cause hot flaming wrath to cease.

15. Immortal glory to thy name,
Who died to make us sinners live;
Who now doth peace on earth proclaim,
And choicest blessings freely give!
-

CHRIST'S ASCENSION TO GLORY.

1. **M**Y soul, awake, and lift thy head;
Quickly arise from this thy bed,
To soar above the scenes of earth,
And view by faith thy Lord's new birth.
2. With love and gratitude survey
The course of this bright Orb of day—
From heav'n into the Virgin's womb,
And thence into a virgin tomb.
3. He came, my soul, the blessed He,
To purchase life and bliss for thee;
And still he comes, these to confer
On all the objects of his care.
4. Behold, he quits the shades of night,
Appears once more on coasts of light;
Bears in his body marks and scars,
Which form so many glorious stars.
5. He re-ascends his native sky
With pomp and glorious majesty;
While saints and angels form his train,
And celebrate his gracious reign.
6. 'Rejoice, ye heav'nly hosts,' they cry,
'Behold the King of glory nigh;

'He'

- ‘ He comes, in your abodes to dwell,
 ‘ With richest spoils from earth and hell.
- 7 ‘ Ye golden gates, your leaves display,
 ‘ Make his triumphal chariot way;
 ‘ For, as the mighty Lord of hosts,
 ‘ He now ascends to heav’n’s bright coasts.
- 8 ‘ He spoil’d the Grave of her domain,
 ‘ Left tyrant Death stript of his reign;
 ‘ As saints’ great Head he goes before
 ‘ To open heav’n’s eternal-door;—
- 9 ‘ There to prepare a fix’d abode
 ‘ For them with angels and with God,
 ‘ Where they shall share his blissful fight,
 ‘ And dwell in everlasting light.’
- 10 As they approach, th’ angelic quire
 Assume with joy the golden lyre,
 Transported at the Saviour’s name,
 And eager to extol his fame.
- 11 These marshal’d hosts in order wait
 To re-admit their King in state,
 Him usher to his glorious throne,
 Where the Eternal reigns alone.
- 12 To grace the triumphs of the day,
 Their humble homage quick they pay;
 And in sweet concert join to sing
 Hosannas to their glorious King.
- 13 Tho’ cloth’d with flesh, they own his sway,
 And quick as thought his word obey;
 Before his throne they lowly bend,
 And as their God him all attend.

- 14 Ye faints, in this event-rejoice,
On faith's strong wing lift soul and voice
Th' exalted Saviour's praise to sing—
And with glad hearts your tribute bring.
- 15 He came from heav'n for you to die;
For you ascended to the sky;
For you he reigns supreme above,
To perfect all his schemes of love.
- 16 There he prepares a blest abode
For all his chosen with their God;
And thither soon will you each bring,
To celebrate your God and King;—
- 17 To share his love through endless days,
To sing to him immortal lays;
Bliss to enjoy before his face,
When glory shall succeed to grace.
- 18 Let his praise then be still your theme,
All honours render to his name;
In a still grateful heart record
The deeds performed by the Lord.
- 19 Let your whole conduct speak his praise,
And recommend his righteous ways;
Let grace therein throughout still shine,
And heart and life still more refine.

ON our LORD'S TRANSFIGURATION.

WE hail that bright, that Morning Star
Which shines with beams more glorious far
Than yonder sun, great lamp of day,
When deck'd with his meridian ray.

We hail thy rise on Tabor hill,
 Whose light th' adjacent vales did fill;
 A light immortal, all divine,
 Did from thy sacred orb then shine.
 The King of glory and of might
 We hail, while clad in robes of light,
 In all the majesty of God,
 Which made that mount like heav'n's abode.
 A Sun divine thou didst appear,
 And light, as robes of state, didst wear;
 A Sun, for underived light,
 Which shone with beams divinely bright.
 But whence this bright, this sudden day?
 Whence so refulgent thine array?
 So pure in spotless virgin white,
 As to o'erpow'r all mortal sight?
 Did thy blest Godhead then dispense
 Such sacred unknown influence,
 As seem'd to change thy outward frame
 Into some bright celestial flame,
 Thy raiment into robes so bright
 As angels wear, these sons of light?
 Such glory, what else could impart?
 For mimic this, sure, could no art;
 For now the Son of man appears
 God's Son, and all his glory wears.
 Thrice blest who saw this sight divine,
 Saw God himself through manhood shine,
 The highly-favour'd happy three,
 Who were on Tabor then with thee!
 Who could thence say, Sure we beheld
 The brightest Rose of Sharon's field,
 The Source of uncreated light
 Array'd in vesture, O how bright!
 So bright, indeed, as seem'd to say,
 "Behold the Son of God to-day,
 " Whose

5

10

15

20

25

30

35

40

" Whose

" Whose are the stores of grace and truth,
 " All shining in immortal youth !"
 The sons of light before thy ray,
 Like stars before the orb of day,
 Seem shrouded in a cloudy vail, 45
 When thy superiour beams prevail.
 From thee their light and joys do flow,
 Yea unto thee their all they owe ;
 Who said at first, " Let there be light,"
 And quick it sprung from womb of night ; 50
 Who, by thine all-creating breath,
 Form'd all things both in heav'n and earth.
 Thou art their Sun 'midst realms of light,
 Whose presence makes these regions bright,
 The source of glory and of bliss 55
 To all the happy heirs of grace.
 The transient blaze on Tabor hill
 Is there by thine enjoyed still,
 And forms so glorious a ray
 As proves their bright immortal day. 60
 Soon shed thy beams from pole to pole,
 And all the pow'rs of hell control ;
 Soon bring all nations to thy light,
 And thereby chace the shades of night ;
 Soon make thy Church like Tabor hill, 65
 When thy bright beams the cloud did fill,
 And through this vail diffus'd a ray
 Which quite obscur'd the lamp of day.
 Our souls prepare, and then translate
 To that all-glorious happy state, 70
 Where thou in glory bright art seen,
 And not one cloud shall intervene.
 There all thy saints dwell in thy sight,
 Still shine by thy reflected light,
 Behold the brightness of thy face, 75
 Employ'd in praise that ne'er shall cease,

Beyond

Beyond the reign of yonder sun,
 Yea, even while endless ages run.
 Be it my lot, most gracious God,
 To dwell thus in thy blest abode,
 To see my Saviour with these eyes,
 Array'd with glory in the skies;
 And share, in that thrice happy place,
 The smiles which clothe Emmanuel's face;
 Where my heart shall not once more fear,
 Nor my cheek fully shall one tear—
 Where I shall worship at his feet,
 And share for aye a bliss complete.

80

85

The CONSUMMATION.

THE low, the passing scenes of earth,
 Its wealth, or pride, or noble birth;
 Nor all the pomp of regal state,
 These idols of the rich and great,
 Do here engage my soaring muse;
 For these as childish toys she views,
 Compar'd with nature's final fate,
 The CONSUMMATION of this state;
 Th' interment of this earthly ball,
 With all its kingdoms great and small.

5

10

The lofty theme, O Lord, inspire,
 Touch heart and lip with hallow'd fire;
 Teach to describe the solemn scene
 In which each attribute shall reign,
 Our Jesus' Godhead be confess'd
 Both by the wicked and the blest.

15

Come then, my soul, attend, survey
 The glorious scenes of this dread day,
 Big with the fate of human kind,
 And will, their sep'rate lot assign'd,

20

*

Q q

Exalt

Exalt the faints to dwell with God,
 The wicked doom to hell's abode—
 To regions of immortal pain,
 While Zion's sons in bliss shall reign.
 The Great Archangel soon will come 25
 To summon mankind to their doom ;
 While faints salute the solemn day,
 The wicked fill'd are with dismay.
 I see the mighty Seraph stand,
 One foot on sea one on dry land ; 30
 The clouds his flowing robes compose,
 And radiant beams his form disclose ;
 While the bright bow adorns his head,
 And marks him Judge of quick and dead.
 I see him lift to heav'n his arm, 35
 The sign which gives the dread alarm,
 And hear that loud tremendous sound,
 Which reach shall nature's ample round—
 Hear him now swear by that great God
 Who fills all space as his abode, 40
 Jehovah whom we should adore,
 That time and days shall be no more ;
 That now Eternity must reign,
 As that Jehovah's dread domain,
 And of man's being prove the date, 45
 In this unbounded endless state.
 He spoke, and thunders said Amen :
 Hear his dread voice, ye sons of men !
 A voice then to be heard by all,
 And which obey must great and small. 50
 What awful sound next strikes my ear !
 Sure, 'tis the final trump I hear—
 The great Archangel's solemn sound,
 Which quick pervades creation's round,
 Makes millions tremble all and quake, 55
 Earth to its very centre shake ;

The

The living feel a sudden death,
The dead to quit their bed of earth;
Makes ocean meet the distant clouds,
And thence recoil in bursting floods,
Pour forth its myriads to the shore,
Enjoin'd to hide their dust no more,
Who must now quit their wat'ry tomb,
To meet their fate-deciding doom.

60

While nature at this voice doth shake;
The dead from their long sleep awake;
The sun stops short in his career,
And seasons cease to form the year;
The sun, shorn of his radiant rays,
Will then for ever cease to blaze;
The silver moon shall sackcloth wear,
And all the stars drop from their sphere;
While other suns adorn the sky,
The Deity's bright progeny.

65

At this tremendous last alarm,
Our race in countless numbers swarm;
Unthought of myriads which surpass
The stars, the sands, and spires of grass,
Cast forth, to meet their final doom,
From the dark recess of the tomb.
These are soon made to take their stand
On the great Judge's either hand.

70

The pow'rs of darkness too appear,
While thunders roar in front and rear;
For now their time of torment's come,
Nor can their host elude the doom.

80

In hope or fear they all await
To hear from him their final fate;
While dread appals the left-hand throng,
The saints prepare to join in song:
From his bright throne the Judge them owns,
Invites to wear immortal crowns,

85

90

To dwell for aye before his face,
 As sons and heirs by sov'reign grace;
 To share the purchase of his love, 95
 And reign with him as kings above.
 Those on the left he dooms to dwell
 With ever-burning flames in hell,
 As an accursed hopeless race,
 For whom there now remains no grace, 100
 To dwell with fiends, and share their woe—
 Where streams of liquid sulphur flow.

With their dread doom now issue forth
 Thunders and flames of hottest wrath,
 Th' Almighty's vengeful missive arms, 105
 Which forthwith spread their dread alarms.
 These drive the rebels from his throne
 To the abyss to weep and moan;
 And in their course quick seize the ball,
 And quite consume its fulness all: 110
 The works of nature and of art,
 Like a fleet shadow all depart.
 The swelling billows toss their head;
 Ocean but serves the flames to feed;
 While blended earth, and seas, and sky, 115
 Now all in flaming ruins lie.
 Amid the solemn horrid scene,
 While angry Heav'n is own'd to reign,
 The sons of woe are plung'd to hell,
 With everlasting fire to dwell. 120
 Almighty Justice guards them there,
 As in a dungeon of despair,
 Whose gates it shuts ne'er to unbar,
 While Heav'n's bright scenes are seen from far.
 Mean-while, life's heirs, without dismay, 125
 Face all the terrors of the day—
 View nature into ruins hurl'd,
 Witness the fun'ral of the world,

Return

Return in triumph to God's throne,
Where he as sons them each shall own. 130

The Prince of Life these legions head,
So lately raised from the dead,

Conducts this vast redeemed host
To heav'n's unbounded glorious coast,

To dwell in domes before his face, 135
Where glory shall succeed to grace.

Ye sons of men, for this prepare, 140
Be this your chief, your daily care,

Your fervent and unceasing pray'r;
For soon to you time is no more,

Your day of grace will soon be o'er,
When dread eternity shall reign,

And usher in one fixed scene.
By faith still view these things as near,

And let them call forth holy fear— 145
A deep concern to walk with God,

Obedient to his sacred word;
To pass your days and years on earth

So as t' escape eternal wrath,
To reach that vast immortal prize, 150

Thro' Christ secur'd beyond the skies.
This day will come, to view unfold

What you and each one must behold,
This passing scene of mortal things

Take flight, as if on eagle's wings, 155
Not daring once to keep its place,

Before th' Eternal's glorious face.
Who read these lines, come too, survey

The joys and terrors of this day,
When you and I must take our stand 160

On the great Judge's either hand;
By him be welcom'd to his throne,

Or plung'd to hell at his dread frown—
Q 3 Adjudg'd

Adjug'd to dwell in quenchless fire,
 Or sing his praise on golden lyre, 165
 The world in flames we must behold,
 Eternal scenes to view unfold,
 Sun, moon, and stars, torn from their spheres,
 Time, nature sink in endless years.

Let not vain pleasures then betray 170

Once to forget this solemn day,
 Nor the pursuits of sin and sense
 Allow'd 'gainst it our minds to fence.
 None can then stand the Judge before
 Who does not now his grace implore. 175

To's mercy quick by faith betake,
 And find salvation for his sake.

Others must quake before his face,
 Be doom'd to dwell in that dread place

Where Justice stern shall wound with pain, 180
 And ceaseless triumphs still maintain;

Display the vengeance of that God
 Who rebels dooms to this abode.

O God, be then our shield and guard,
 Our life, our bliss, and vast reward; 185

And save in mercy from that place
 Where wretched men shall find no grace.

This do for our Emmanuel's sake,
 To whom we now ourselves betake.

A Thought on INFIDELITY.

WHY should a soul for future bliss design'd,
 Once wish to die? a wish how vain and blind!
 Guilt only makes annihilation gain,
 Till virtue's gone the very thought would pain.
 The bane of joy in life, of hope in death, 5
 Curs'd scheme which fetters heav'n-born souls to earth;
 Our nature robs of truest dignity,
 God's sacred gift, blest immortality;

A scheme.

A scheme which vice alone can recommend,
 And which t' adorn she all her aid doth lend. 10
 Can any coolly face the awful brink,
 And form the wish he may to nothing sink
 At death, and thus become at once extinct?
 Sure none but those to God and virtue lost
 Can of this horrid spectre make their boast. 15
 Sure none who dread not future endless pain
 Can fondly dream this once to be their gain.
 Let Infidels, these daring sons of vice,
 T' oppose Religion use each sly device,
 Still rail and argue what, poor men, they can; 20
 Yet 'tis Religion which adorns the man,
 Directs his steps through life's each dubious road,
 And points the way to endless Bliss with God;
 Yea, ev'n in death shall this sustain the just,
 Grace their mild eve, nor then desert their dust. 25
 Of this race each to God and man's a foe,
 Though he pretend his love to both doth glow;
 Each is, alas! to sacred virtue lost,
 Though he of zeal for virtue makes his boast.
 How base for man to wish himself all clay— 30
 His date of being fixed to a day!
 To wish so noble, so divine a form,
 In each respect quite levell'd with the worm!

A HINT to the GREAT:

THE happiest mortal ever liv'd on earth,
 Though blest with wealth and a distinguish'd birth,
 Had yet some anxious cares to make him know
 That wealth nor greatness can secure from woe,
 Not here unmix'd felicity is giv'n,
 That each may seek his happiness in heav'n;

Where

Where streams of purest bliss alone can flow,
Which in their course to boundless rivers grow.

On the DEATH of MOSES.

1. **O** MAN of God, thy death how blest !
How sweet thy journey to the sky ?
When from life's toils God bade thee rest,
Ascend the sacred mount and die.
 2. Thine was the noblest road to death,
And thine the most perfumed grave ;
To yield in God's own arms thy breath,
And there resign the soul he gave.
 3. 'Twas but recline thy fainting head
Upon thy heav'nly Father's breast,
Whose hands prepar'd thy dusty bed,
And laid the mortal part to rest.
 4. No pain, no anguish pierc'd thy heart,
No clouds o'ercast thine ev'ning skies ;
'Twas but in triumph to depart,
And ope in heav'n thy ravish'd eyes.
 5. So may I yield my latest breath,
Resign life on the Saviour's breast ;
With honour quit the scenes of earth,
And rise with him to endless rest.
-

The DEATH of FRIENDS improved.

1. **M**Y Friends and Companions so dear,
Must I soon you each one resign ?
Will death from my bosom you tear ?
And, ah ! you no longer be mine ?

2. Shall the grave, that dreary abode,
Receive your remains from my sight;
To be there consumed to mould,
And bury'd in the shades of night?
3. Yes, friends and relations, though dear,
Must all from each other soon part;
For Death is unmov'd with the tear
Which flows from the most feeling heart.
4. The Grave, though a lonely retreat,
Is yet the long-home of our race;
For in vain 'twould be to intreat
For an act here of favour or grace.
5. How cruel that tyrant, indeed;
Which spares not the most tender heart!
But leaves such in sorrows to bleed,
While friends are laid low by his dart.
6. Neither sighs nor tears can once move
This monarch of absolute sway;
No attachment of friendship or love
Can purchase one moment's delay.
7. Our Friends, ah! he plucks from our arms,
Lays low in his dark silent bed,
Stript of all their endearing charms,
And numbers them among the dead.
8. While the grave, that gloomy abode,
Receives the remains of each friend,
If their better part is with God,
We hope yet in bliss them to find.
9. While spar'd, still be this our chief care,
To improve each day for their well;

- To beg grace for them in prayer—
That in heav'n we with them may dwell.
- 10 Should grace then our hearts here unite,
The Saviour own us as his friends;
We'll meet in the regions of light,
When frail life's short journey here ends.
- 11 Tho' death should then from me these tear,
And I to the grave each consign;
Yet have I no reason to fear,
But they shall yet each one be mine.
- 12 Now we part but for a short space,
To meet in our Father's abode;
For if his dear children through grace,
We dwell shall for ever with God.
-

ON SPRING.

- 1 COME now, my thoughts, sweet flow along,
While nature lends aid to the song;
To view these pleasant scenes now bring
Which decorate the joyous Spring.
- 2 The birds now swell their warbling throats,
Each one in sweetly-varied notes;
All in melodious concert sing,
And usher in the gentle Spring.
- 3 The flow'ry fields begin to smile,
Lo! a fair Eden is our Isle;
Nature profuse her treasures yields,
And with fresh verdure clothes the fields.
- 4 Behold the gentle lambkins bound,
All sportive o'er the blooming ground;

The earth, bedeck'd in mild array,
Imparts new graces to the day.

5 The morning air is soft as balm,
The evening-tide serenely calm;
Each object now invites to walk
'Midst sweets of Spring, and of these talk.

6 How rich the bounty of that God
Who thus adorns his works abroad,
And makes in season all appear—
Flush with new life t' enrich the year!

7 Ye warblers of the verdant bow'rs,
Now usher in the early hours;
With joy emit your sweetest notes,
While praise still swells your little throats.

8 Let man with you his Maker praise,
And celebrate in grateful lays
The source whence all our blessings flow—
All we can hope, or share below.

9 If to the flow'ry fields we stray,
Or roam amid the budding spray,
Still scenes of beauty charm the eye,
And with each other seem to vie.

10 The mind these elevate and raise,
They claim for God the debt of praise;
Each still resounds in reason's ear,
'Tis God who thus adorns the year.

11 What time we rise to hail the dawn,
Or cross the verdant flow'ry lawn,
Health her rich blessings then bestows,
And with fresh bloom each feature glows.

- 12 The rising flow'rs their form disclose,
Fair rivals of the cultur'd rose;
Their native sweetness these display,
And add fresh beauties to the day.
- 13 Yet these mild beauties do not rise
To deck the earth, or please our eyes;
Nor for the lovely fair-one made,
To grace her head, then quickly fade.
- 14 For nobler ends they are design'd,
Sweet emblems of th' unfullied mind,
Where grace and purity bear sway,
And still improve to realms of day.
- 15 These all proclaim their Maker's praise;
Wisdom and goodness each displays;
They teach this lesson to mankind,
Still to maintain Content of mind.
- 16 Did Grace our nature once renew,
And change it like the lilly's hue,
Our days and years would sweetly roll,
And Spring unspent still charm the soul.
- 17 In Jesus, Sharon's choicest Rose,
Most lovely charms themselves disclose;
He, once array'd in crimson die,
The rose itself did far outvie.
- 18 In him the lilly's fairest hue
Still blooms, with graces ever new;
His peerless virtues know no bound,
While each perfection's in him found.
- 19 He is the sum of all that's fair,
In beauty far beyond compare;

In him both God and man unite,
And here may both still find delight.

20 O! may his ever-honour'd name
Be still our fav'rite, constant theme,
His Grace true happiness impart,
And form a Spring to cheer our heart.

On the BEE.

NOW flies the little buzzing Bee
Along the flow'ry field and lea,
To sip the dew which decks the mead,
And gather fragrant store with speed;
While zephyrs fan with gentle wing 5
The tender produce of the Spring.
Soon as the warmer breezes blow,
And beams of morn begin to glow,
Her task with gentle humming plies,
And with rich treasure loads her thighs. 10
Thus, ere the fragrant blooms decay,
Well she improves each passing day,
Importing from each vale and dell,
Wherewith she stores her curious cell,
Nor wastes her time on idle wing. 15
Till are quite fled the sweets of Spring,—
Till Winter strip each flow'ry mead,
Their bloom and verdure all quite fled;
As if her breast was fully fraught
With wisdom pure, divinely taught. 20
Thus she provides 'gainst time of need,
Whereon she may subsist and feed;
And so instructs the human race
Still to improve their day of grace,
To lay up treasures in the sky, 25
Secur'd to perpetuity.

Thus taught, be it our constant care,
 For an Hereafter to prepare;
 Our care each day still to improve,
 That we may share true bliss above,
 When time and days shall find no place,
 All lost in one eternal space;
 And, like the Bee, shun all delay,
 As time so swiftly flies away.

30

*The GREAT invited to Contemplate the BEAUTIES of
 NATURE.*

- 1 **Y**E Great, now quit parade and show,
 And leave the busy crowd a while;
 While softest zephyrs gently blow,
 And nature's charms upon you smile.
- 2 Let no vain silly selfish pride
 Corrupt your taste for truest joy;
 God's word and works be these your guide,
 On these your vacant hours employ.
- 3 No noxious weeds once spring up here,
 But trees and fruits of Paradise;
 Nothing to wound the heart or ear,
 But what leads both to yonder skies.
- 4 These scenes beget no wild desires,
 Do not from Wisdom's paths divert;
 What comes from God his love inspires,
 And tends to meliorate the heart.
- 5 When rosy morn appears all gay,
 And sheds her beams to deck the lawn,
 What charms adorn the new-born day!
 God shines forth in the early dawn.

What

- 6 What tho' noon-tide should scorch the hills,
And nature's produce well nigh fade;
Recourse we have to cooling rills,
And shelter find in the green shade.
- 7 In ev'ry spot may pleasures dwell,
If we bring there a mind serene;
In mountain, vale, in wood or dell;
For all is nature's varied scene.
- 8 From morn to noon, or mildest eve,
When moon and stars adorn the sky,
The works of God will pleasure give,
Improve the heart, delight the eye.
- 9 From shew and folly's train retreat,
God's word and works chuse for your guide;
Content sure dwells not with the great,
But flies from courts, from pomp and pride.
- 10 The fields, the meads, and vales invite,
With ev'ry flow'r and bud that blows;
The groves and streams afford delight,
And all yield pastime and repose.
- 11 Compar'd to these, what tinsel toys
The fond amusements of the great!
Whose costly varied scene but cloy,
And leaves a sting to wound the heart.
- 12 The flow'rs and lillies of the field
Are cloth'd in robes of richer die,
Than all the wealth of kings can yield;
Their robes with these cannot once vie.
- 13 While we survey these works divine,
They teach us wisdom as they grow;

For this throughout the whole doth shine,
Yea, in each flow'r and bud that blow.

A Friendly Hint to the FAIR-SEX.

- 1 **G**IVE ear to this unwelcome truth,
Ye fair, ye gay of early years,
On whom the virgin bloom of youth
In all its native grace appears.
- 2 Tho' fair, your charms must soon decay,
Your form, so bright, soon turn to mould;
What is it but well-finish'd clay,
And life itself a tale soon told?
- 3 Since days on eagle's pinions fly,
And life's short tale will soon be o'er;
Since youth and beauty quickly die,
Yea time itself be soon no more:
- 4 Be wise, and seize each fleeting hour,
The precious moments well employ;
Tho' time should then these charms devour,
You share shall those it can't destroy.
- 5 These inward charms which Grace bestows,
Do still improve to endless day;
The fairest lilly, brightest rose,
Must yield to their superiour sway.

GOD to be praised as CREATOR and PRESERVER.

- 1 **A**DORE the matchless pow'r of God,
Which made the hills in order rise,
Which pour'd the wat'ry world abroad,
And round us spread the spacious skies.

2 Adore

- 2 Adore that wisdom which ordain'd
The sun's bright orb to rule the day,
The moon to shine at his command,
While all the starry hosts obey.
- 3 Adore the goodness of that Lord
Who fills the spacious earth with food ;
Who form'd each creature by his word,
And on review pronounc'd it good.
- 4 Whither direct our wond'ring eye,
Where his strange works are not display'd?
If we behold the plains of sky,
Or thence survey the earth we tread.
- 5 Each shrub, each plant, and flow'r below,
Still makes his pow'r and wisdom known :
The sky's o'ercast, and storms quick blow,
If he gives orders from his throne.
- 6 All creatures, num'rous though they be,
Are still the objects of his care ;
From's presence whither can we flee?
For God is present ev'ry where.
- 7 In heav'n he's seen by beams of love ;
By flames of wrath in hell beneath :
'Tis on his earth we tread or move,
And 'tis his air we daily breathe.
- 8 His pow'r still forms our constant guard,
O'er us he keeps a watchful eye—
Whate'er concerns us doth regard,
And, as a Father, is still nigh.
- 9 While the whole earth, air, sea, and sky,
Perpetual tribute to him raise,

Let not one day, one night pass by,
Without its debt of grateful praise.

10 Does ev'ry creature, in its way,
Declare the glory of our God?
Shall favour'd man then disobey,
Nor once pay homage to his Lord?

11 No, rather let us cease to be
Than spurn our Saviour's easy yoke—
Whose service is true liberty,
'Whose pow'r from nothing all hath spoke.

On AUTUMN.

AH! how does time still fly away,
Fly unperceived by the gay!
While seasons in succession roll,
Their influ'nce shed from pole to pole!
Of late did Summer deck our Isle, 5
While fair creation round did smile,
Her choicest beauties each where seen
Attempter'd with the softest green.
This fled, now jovial Autumn reigns, 10
And with its treasures loads the plains.
While these in yellow robes are clad,
We scarce regret that May is fled;
While plenty crowns our happy Isle,
What though its beauties no more smile.
This welcome season of the year 15
The husbandman with joy doth cheer,
In hope ere long t' increase his store,
And share the fruits of toils now o'er.
How pleasant now each rural scene!
Where fair industry may be seen, 20

All

All active to improve each day,
And reap the fields without delay;
All active to secure their store,
That famine may invade no more.
This to attain all hands employs; 25
This once attain'd creates fresh joys;
While they in grateful praise should † sing
Nature's blest Author and great King,
From whose benign and lib'ral hand
Plenty descends to bless our land. 30

This season too, ah! flies apace,
And leaves a vail on nature's face;
For soon will Autumn disappear,
And Winter desolate the year,
When storms and tempests spend their rage, 35
And with each element engage.

So man just now may shine in pow'r,
Yet prove the pageant of an hour—
May shine in all the pomp of state,
But, ah! next moment, mark his fate, 40
His tow'ring boughs bestrew the ground,
While scarce a trace is to be found;
His airy hopes are all quite fled,
Lo! now he mingles with the dead.
Nor beauty, wealth, or regal state, 45
Nor all the honours of the great,
Can once protract the scanty span,
Think then, O! think on this, vain man!
Nor glory in thy present state,
For such may be thy morrow's fate. 50
Be it our care that life to save
Which blooms beyond the gloomy grave;

† I wish I could say so sing; but, alas! the God of seasons is too often overlooked even by those who liberally share his bounty, and that too while it produces a natural joy.

These joys to gain which are still new,
 Yet, ah! sought after but by few,
 Where Winter's storms no more infest;
 Where they from ev'ry labour rest,
 And are with God completely blest—
 Blest with the fruit of what they've sown,
 Which they enjoy still as their own;
 Nor will the change of seasons fear,
 For theirs will never disappear.

On WINTER.

OF late the fields were all array'd,
 In robes of plenty all were clad,
 While 'mid the busy rural scene
 Both festive joys and mirth still reign.
 But now all this is fled away,
 And ev'ry bloom doth quite decay;
 These scenes no longer grace the fields,
 For each a dreary prospect yields.
 Now storms and tempests from the north,
 With clouds in dread array come forth;
 While Winter stern proclaims a war,
 And, thund'ring from his gloomy car,
 Makes us to feel his pow'r from far.
 Frost, snow, and hail compose his train,
 And stormy winds announce his reign;
 While to our coasts he all these brings,
 He awful rides on whirlwind's wings.
 When these discharge their missive arms,
 Forthwith are spread such dread alarms
 As nature all is made to feel,
 While they the peasant's hands soon seal.
 Now from the mountain's hoary head
 The storms descend with winged speed,

To usher Winter's grim domain,
 And with it vest each hill and plain. 25
 The gloom condensing spreads a vail,
 Which seems o'er all soon to prevail;
 While, to the keenest gazing eye,
 Not ev'n one star illumines the sky.
 Now Winter keen its conquests spreads 30
 O'er flow'ry fields and verdant meads,
 The floods in icy fetters binds,
 And rides triumphant in the winds.
 His breath makes woods and forests bend,
 And massy rocks asunder rend. 35
 But what though Winter thus prevail,
 And the dread north pour forth its hail;
 Though snows, and many a furious blast,
 Should sweep along the pathless waste;
 Though the proud main should foam and roar, 40
 And with its billows lash the shore;
 While Winter stern rides on the winds,
 And with its breath the waters binds,
 Yet 'midst these scenes may we employ
 Our hours, and social bliss enjoy, 45
 The sweets of well-plac'd friendship share,
 That which divides our joys and care.
 When night succeeds the short-liv'd day,
 The gloomy hours steal soft away,
 In converse with the friends we love, 50
 Such as refines for joys above.
 While art supplies the absent day,
 We scarce regret the sun's lost ray;
 For social pleasures now invite,
 Beneath the friendly gloom of night. 55
 These mutual profit still impart,
 And still improve a virtuous heart.
 Now to peruse th' instructive page,
 The labours of the worthy Sage,

Be our sweet task t' enlarge the mind, 60
 While here we still fresh pleasures find.
 Thus taught by Wisdom's prudent lore,
 Let us improve each passing hour,
 Afraid lest any run to waste,
 Aware that all will soon be past. 65
 In that blest Book doth Wisdom shine,
 Whose Author is wholly divine;
 Here treasures may be found in store,
 Which bliss secure for evermore.
 This let us prize, each day peruse, 70
 This produce of the sacred Muse,
 Peruse with care and deep revolve,
 For 'tis replete with Jesus' love;
 Replete with charms which ne'er decay,
 Charms which shall bloom to endless day. 75
 Be this my theme, O! may I feel
 It bid each storm within be still;
 Each sinful thought and passion cease,
 While it imparts the balm of peace.
 Should darkness then invest the pole 80
 And Winter awful bear control;
 Should storms and tempests earth assail,
 And frosts and snows for months prevail;
 Yet may we share a calm sun-shine,
 A heart-felt spring almost divine, 85
 A pleasing day calm and serene
 To add fresh beauty to each scene;
 For God benign consults our bliss,
 Commands our joy, secures our peace;
 Bids us 'midst Winter's storm still share 90
 The fruits of his unceasing care,
 The pleasures of domestic life,
 Free from contention, jars, and strife;
 Till brought thence to these climes of bliss,
 Where night and winter ever cease, 95
 Where

Where storms no more infest our sky,
But all is sweet serenity,
Where God himself is all in all
To such as now upon him call.

An ODE on occasion of his MAJESTY'S Illness.

I.

THOU King of kings,
Beneath whose wings
Our race may still a shelter find,
From heaven high
With pity's eye
Look down and be t' afflicted *Britain* kind.

II.

O grant this Pray'r,
In mercy spare
Our Royal Sire, his days prolong;
Restore his health,
More dear than wealth,
And soon let his deliv'rance be our song.

III.

Dispel our fears,
A Nation's tears,
And 'midst the gloom diffuse a ray;
His life, O save
Yet from the grave,
That sacred life save to a distant day.

IV.

Incline thine ear,
Propitious hear
A Nation's sighs and fervent pray'rs;
Avert that wrath
Still from the Earth,
For which, alas! our growing guilt prepares.
Speak

ESSAYS IN POETRY.

V.

Speak but the word,
 Almighty Lord,
 Then shall our sky shine bright as day;
 Our joys o'erflow
 To see that blow
 Which menac'd *Britain* happily thus give way.

VI.

The Royal Pair
 Give long to share
 The purest joys in wedlock's tie;
 A Consort's tears
 Wipe off, and fears
 Defeat, till both are rais'd to reign on high.

VII.

His seed still blest,
 Enrich with grace,
 And of that line, to latest day,
 Let there be one
 To fill our *Throne*,
 Who shall with honour *Britain's* Sceptre sway.

VIII.

In climes above,
 Through divine love,
 May each at length a kingdom share;
 In bliss be thron'd,
 As sons still own'd,
 For this may grace with each event prepare.

IX.

The Nation blest'd,
 Our fears revers'd,

With

With grateful homage let us own
The God of love,
Who from above
On us shew'd mercy when he seem'd to frown,

X.

Let all unite,
With felt-delight,
In praising him still with our song;
To years remote,
This favour'd spot
Be bless'd, and he our prosp'rous state prolong.

*On the PUBLIC THANKSGIVING for his MAJESTY'S
Recovery from his late Illness.*

I.

MY Muse, prepare
To bear thy share,
With joy, in *Britain's* grateful song;
A loyal theme
This day doth claim,
The noblest efforts of thy pen and tongue.

II.

Let all unite,
With felt delight,
In praising him who rules the sky,
Who turn'd our night
To noon so bright,
When he himself deliv'rance sent from high.

III.

Thine eyes beheld,
Thy pow'r did shield

S f

And

And mercy save our Royal Sire ;
 Restor'd his health,
 The Nation's wealth—
 Who would not gladly then assume the lyre?

IV.

A Nation's fears,
 And loyal tears,
 Thou hast beheld, and chang'd to joy ;
 Our pray'rs were heard,
 Vows didst regard,
 Whence thanks to-day our grateful lips employ.

V.

His *Life* long spare,
 Be this thy care,
 His ev'ry blifs for years prolong ;
 That hour be late
 Which from this state
 Removes a KING whose virtues claim our song.

VI.

Thou Pow'r supreme,
 From ills exeem
 The eve of his declining day ;
 When here his sun
 His race hath run,
 Give then to share in heav'n thy blifsful ray.

VII.

A *Consort's* tears,
 With all her fears,
 Thou hast beheld, and not in vain ;
 These now no more,
 Her joys run o'er ;
 For thine own hand hath heal'd and eas'd her
 pain.

Bless

VIII.

Bless both on earth
Till their last breath,
Then raise to mansions ne'er to part,
To share a Crown,
Realms still their own,
For aye made one in bliss, in love, and heart.

IX.

Let his each Heir
Such honours share
As God alone can here bestow,
Then reign for aye
In realms of day,
Where streams of purest bliss for ever flow.

X.

Our *Royal Sire*,
Be thy desire:
To him who reigns o'er all supreme,
Whose is thy bliss,
Thy joys and peace,
And let his praise be still thy grateful theme.

XI.

To him devote
Each pow'r of thought,
And let his glory be thy aim;
His will thy guide
Whate'er betide;
For this alone confers immortal fame.

XII.

Then shall thy day
Prolong its ray,

And shed rich blessings on our land;
 While years remote
 Shall not forget
 How much they owe these to thy Royal hand.

On the REVOLUTION, written for the 5th of November 1788.

I.

DOES that blest year
 In course appear
 In which the LORD our *freedom* wrought?
 Made bare his hand
 To shield our *land*,
 And visibly for *Britain* fought!

II.

We hail that year,
 That day so dear
 To ev'ry truly British heart!
 That year, that day,
 Whose cheering ray
 Should joy and gratitude impart!

III.

Celestial maid!
 In light array'd,
 Sweet *Liberty*, with thy fair train,
 We own thy sway,
 Hail thy mild ray!
 To latest years o'er *Britain* reign.

IV.

To speak thy praise
 In prose or lays,

Exceeds

Exceeds the efforts of each pen;
Or to recount
The vast amount
Of thy dear blessings unto men.

V.

Joys nigh divine
Make our face shine,
While to thine altars we repair,
In Zion bless
The God of grace,
Who thy recovery made his care.

VI.

Our God and King,
Thy praise we'll sing,
For the great wonders thou hast wrought
For Britain's Isle,
Tho' crimes defile,
For those exceed our praise and thought.

VII.

Hell form'd her trains,
And Rome her chains,
Our Church and nation to enslave;
A biggot prince
And pow'rs of France
Combine—from both did God us save.

VIII.

On the dread brink,
About to sink,
Religion, offspring of the sky,
Stood all aghast,
To breathe its last,
When God deliv'rance sent from high!

IX.

He view'd our grief,
 Commands relief,
 Brought our DELIV'ERER to the shore;
 And, by his hand,
 Redeems our land,
 While Hell and Rome alone deplore.

X.

The willing gales
 Fill his spread sails,
 And safe convey him to our land,
 To plead our cause
 And injur'd laws,
 Hereto commission'd by God's hand.

XI.

When Rome grew proud,
 Did vaunt aloud,
 And Zion fear'd her ruin nigh;
 While storms and floods,
 And thickest clouds
 Beset—the sun illumines our sky,

XII.

Dispels the gloom *
 From France and Rome,
 Sheds o'er our Isle a happy day;
 While thousands blest
 Now share sweet rest
 From lawless pow'r's despotic sway.

XIII.

That happy day,
 Whose friendly ray

* The deep distress to which French measures, and the strenuous efforts used to introduce Popery, reduced this nation.

Disclos'd the hidden hellish death * ;
 That day and year
 Once more appear,
 When Heav'n repell'd impending wrath.

XIV.

While here combine,
 This doth outshine
 The former works God for us wrought ;
 These here we greet,
 They all here meet,
 And with rich blessings are still fraught.

XV.

These works of Grace
 Did fires rehearse,
 And give in trust unto their heirs ;
 Their sons prolong
 The same in song,
 While e'vry age their fruit still shares.

XVI:

Hence, 'midst our woes,
 We still repose
 Our hope in God, who still can save ;
 Protect from harm
 By his strong arm,
 Give vict'ry o'er Death and the Grave.

XVII:

Till time's no more
 May he still show'r
 His richest blessings on our land ;
 Maintain our peace,
 Secure our bliss,
 Our love and gratitude command.

* The Gun-powder Plot.

XVIII.

Of GEORGE'S line,
Till time decline,
Let there be one who shall bear sway;
Maintain our cause,
Rule by the laws,
While *Britain* shares a prosp'rous day.

*On the DEATH of a GOSPEL MINISTER, supposed to
be written by one of his People.*

- 1 IN yonder grave our Pastor lies,
From whose touch'd lips, in flowing strains,
That truth which raises to the skies,
Oft dropt like dew or gentle rains.
- 2 From this dark silent bed of death
Such accents can be heard no more;
His place him knows no more on earth,
While we, alas! our loss deplore.
- 3 His closed lips shall no more feed,
Now in the land of silence laid;
While here our hearts in sorrow bleed,
Depriv'd now of his friendly aid.
- 4 Tho' dead, he seems yet to address
The list'ning throng in heav'nly strains;
His living worth we still confess,
For oft he sooth'd our heart-felt pains.
- 5 Oft did he plead his Master's cause;
Our souls then bow'd, were made to yield;
Oft did enforce his righteous laws,
And thus direct to Mercy's shield.

- 6 The grace of Jesus was his theme,
On this he dwelt, thereof did share;
No pains thought great to spread his fame—
This was his chief delight and care.
- 7 While he thus spoke our bosoms glow'd;
And purest joys did spring within;
Our melted hearts in tears then flow'd,
Made to confess and hate our sin.
- 8 Own'd and assisted of his God,
He spake to men his truths divine;
These sacred dictates of his word,
Which cheer the heart, its pow'rs refine.
- 9 Our minds, thus caught, hung on his lips,
Our ravish'd hearts he did engage;
His words a lamp to guide our steps,
A comment on the sacred page.
- 10 When he once shook the vengeful rod,
Our souls were made to hear its sound,
Arm'd with the terrors of the Lord,
Which our hearts felt, their pow'r oft found.
- 11 While he allur'd with Mercy's voice,
Each word bespoke the feeling heart;
He wept o'er sinners caught with toys,
And his soul felt their future smart.
- 12 By ev'ry motive he enforc'd
Their speedy flight to mercy's Lord;
The grace of Jesus oft propos'd,
As authoris'd by the word.
- 13 To comfort souls, too, was his care,
When sad deprest with guilty fears;

Such

- Such did exhort quick to repair
To him who wipes away all tears.
- 14 Their sorrows felt, their joys did share,
Those to remove, these to increase
Was his concern and earnest pray'r—
From which he did at no time cease.
- 15 These ends obtain'd, he shar'd a joy
Superior far to that of sense;
Which none can share who ne'er employ
Their care from woe their flock to fence.
- 16 Unlike these men whose life at best
Forms a sad contrast to their faith;
For his appears to all confess
A transcript fair of what he saith.
- 17 Not sway'd by filthy lucre's gain,
He acts from nobler motives far;
To honour God, men to regain,
And hence will shine a burning star.
- 18 Thus shall he shine, while erring guides
Are left to sink in deep despair,
Beneath God's weighty rod besides,
Because they took no pious care.
- 19 When the Chief Shepherd shall appear,
His faithful labours he will own;
Cause stand before him without fear,
While he bestows the promis'd crown.
- 20 His crown, his joy then in the Lord,
Are these blest ones now by him fed,
Or turn'd to Wisdom's pleasant road,
If he, thro' grace, herein hath sped.

P

21. Altho' blind sinners should refuse,
His work is precious in God's eyes,
Who now approves his ends and views,
At death doth raise to yonder skies.
- 22 While we lament our deep-felt loss,
Cheer'd by these views, let us adhere
To the pure doctrines of the Cross,
Which were his pleasure and his care.
- 23 Cheer'd by firm hope, let us pursue
The path by which he trod to God;
Keep his example still in view;
With truth our guide, we'll find the road.
- 24 With our late Pastor we'll yet sing
In higher strains than here below,
When plac'd before our God and King;
While streams of bliss unceasing flow.
- 25 May he with whom the Spirit dwells,
Raise up such work-men in his field;
He who these earthen vessels fills,
Deign now to bless his Church, and shield.
- 26 May he deter all servile souls,
That no such beings it molest;
He who all nature still controls,
Deliver soon from this worst pest.
- 27 May Jesus rise, and dissipate
These haughty scribes who him defy,
Would o'er his vineyard ride in state,
Nor the dread day do once descry.
- 28 May all who at his altar stand
Be men of wisdom and of truth;

Made willing servants by his hand,
And owe to Heav'n a second birth.

A DOXOLOGY to the HOLY TRINITY.

1 **F**ATHER of all, we to thy name
Incessant praise would give,
Who peace on earth dost now proclaim,
And bidst the sinner live.

2 All divine honours to the Son,
Who died to purchase peace,
Our life to ransom with his own,
And cause God's wrath to cease.

3 To that Eternal Spirit be
Immortal glory giv'n,
Whose grace the heart doth purify,
And thus prepares for heav'n.

4 Let all unite with grateful voice
To praise th' Eternal One;
In him, their God, let them rejoice,
Who victory hath won.

5 Let heart and voice with nature join
His honours high to raise;
While all in heaven and earth combine
To celebrate his praise.

6 May grace divine from God the Son,
The Father's love and light,
Communion with the Holy One,
Be ours both day and night.

On the DEATH of an INFANT.

DEAR little stranger! short thy stay,
 Thy visit to these coasts of day;
 Thine eyes but lately hail'd the light,
 Yet are now seal'd in shades of night.
 Scarce had life's vital heav'nly flame,
 Inspir'd thy lovely curious frame,
 When, ah! we mourn that jewel fled,
 That frame forsook, vail'd with death's shade.

Thy dear remains, a mass of clay,
 Soon to be buried from the day,
 Consigned to its native soil,
 To sleep secure from care and toil.
 Life's cares and sorrows are now o'er
 To thee, Dear Babe, its scenes no more,
 These fled, with all beneath the sun;
 For thy contracted race is run.
 To thy remains a tribute due,
 The flowing tear these to bedew,
 The tender feeling of the heart,
 The wound that such events impart.
 The Lord of life himself did weep,
 At his friend's tomb, tho' but asleep,
 From which he meant his pow'r should raise,
 To share on earth still happy days.
 All ye who know a parent's heart *,
 And have so felt a parent's smart,

* The Reader, it is hoped, will be good enough to excuse the publication of this and the following essay, when told that the Child alluded to was the Author's only Son, who died December 26. 1785, that day month he was born. While reasoning with himself about the propriety of permitting these to see the light, Dr Doddridge's Sermon, preached upon occasion of the death of a beloved Child, fell into his hands; the perusal of which so far removed his

Will sure excuse this artless lay;
 Who can but nature's voice obey?
 The rising flow'rs their leaves unfold,
 Unapprehensive of the cold,
 Diffuse around their balmy sweets,
 Not once afraid of noon-tide heats:

scruples as to prevail with him to allow them a place here, in that native dress in which the impressions produced by that affliction clothed them. Though the first may be deemed sufficient on the subject, and, indeed, considering its length, more than sufficient; yet as the thought and mode of versification are diversified in the other, he begs the Reader's indulgence for inserting both. He is sensible there is a delicacy, in submitting things of a private and personal nature to the public eye, for which some may perhaps think no apology sufficient; yet, as the death of Children is a common calamity, he hopes it is not unworthy of the man or the Christian to attempt to comfort others, in a similar case, with the considerations wherewith he himself hath been comforted. To those who have tasted the wormwood and the gall of such a cup, these considerations will not be unacceptable; and such can make allowance for the native emotions of parental affection in situations of this nature, and be disposed to rejoice with him, that they are not left to sorrow in this respect, as they who have no hope. Such can easily excuse what others may perhaps be inclined to criticise or condemn. To the Preface of that valuable and pathetic Sermon would he recommend the reader, as containing what, in his opinion, will not fail to satisfy the candid on this head. May he be permitted to express his humble hope, in the words of that amiable Christian, and eminent minister of Jesus Christ, "that some tender Parent, whom Providence hath joined with him in sad similitude of grief, may find some consolation from what is here tendered, while sitting by the coffin of a beloved Child, or mourning over its grave," which will more than counterbalance the reflections of others, should any be disposed to reflect on these effusions of parental tenderness.

But

But ah! how soon nipp'd by the frost!
 Their transient beauties are quite lost;
 Or scorched by the sun's keen ray, 35
 Their hue and fragrance fade away.
 'Tis so with our frail dying race,
 Who here can have no fixed place;
 Disease and pain our frame soon waste,
 Beneath whose load it can't long last; 40
 Or the grand lev'ler, at one blow,
 May strike it dead, and lay it low,
 Our fleeting life, that empty dream,
 Glides unperceived like a stream,
 Till to the deep abyss it flow, 45
 Which neither bounds nor limits know.
 The springing grass, the morning flow'r,
 Ah! are oft cut down in an hour,
 Their blooming charms quite die away,
 The boast scarce of a summer day, 50
 Like grass man springs, and wastes as soon,
 Or morning flow'rs which fade ere noon,
 Blasted by ev'ry wind that flies,
 So our frail nature quickly dies.
 Such was thy fate, Dear Infant, here, 55
 Late, like a lilly, didst appear,
 In native innocence array'd;
 Yet wast soon number'd with the dead.
 Tho' sudden—unforeseen thy call,
 Yet if a sparrow cannot fall, 60
 Without our heav'nly Father's care,
 Much less these ones who his love share.
 How lovely in thy very death!
 Thy corse still wore the charms of health,
 Seem'd to bespeak thee but asleep, 65
 But ah, that sleep how long and deep!
 Ah! man, frail man, child of a day,
 A wind that passeth soon away;

A fleeting shadow o'er time's plain,
 Scarce for a moment to remain;
 While sin and death thy train compose,
 And twice ten thousand other woes.

70

Scarce had night's orb fulfill'd her round,
 When thou, Dear Babe, didst reach life's bound,
 Was mow'd down by the scythe of death,
 Like seeds of grass sown in the earth.

75

Yet as these have a future spring,
 Who sleep in dust shall wake and sing,
 Their dew is as the dew of grass,
 On them is pass'd an act of grace.

80

Tho' friends are laid beneath the sod,
 The silent grave their dark abode;
 Yet here they find a calm repose,
 Till that dark land its dead disclose;
 Till to fresh life the Lord shall raise,
 And this secure thro' endless days.

85

Big with this hope, thy corse we lay
 In death's drear bed, debar'd from day,
 Assur'd the Lord will raise thee thence,
 In more than native innocence;
 Array'd in brightest robes of light,
 Secur'd from pain, from death and night,
 Completely bless'd in 'MANUEL's ground,
 While endless ages run their round *.

90

* Some may perhaps think, That the hope of the Child's future happiness is expressed here and elsewhere, in this and the following Ode, in too strong terms. Not to mention that some eminent Divines have thought that *all* who die in infancy and non-age are among the number of the blessed, of which opinion the late pious and learned Dr Doddridge seems to have been, as appears from his Sermon already referred to; as also the present Mr Newton of London, whose writings are so generally and justly prized by the godly, as may be seen by consulting

All praise to him who conquer'd death, 95
 Who gives to yield with hope our breath,
 His mild beams sheds o'er the dread grave,
 And one day will all his thence save.
 All praise to him whose word is sure,
 Whose truth and mercy aye endure, 100
 His promise to his and their seed,
 Whether in life with us or dead.
 Bless'd be his name who once did say,
 "Come, my dear lambs, now come away,
 "You still are welcome to my arms, 105
 "To rest secure there from alarms:
 "Forbid not these to come to me,
 "For such shall ever with me be;
 "Of these my kingdom's here compos'd,
 "And shall when this fleet scene is clos'd, 110
 "Come to my arms, dear little ones,
 "You will I own and bless as sons,
 "Raise to my throne to sing my praise,
 "And dwell for aye before my face."
 Blest Jesus whom we should adore, 115
 Whose grace is an exhaustless store,
 Our little one thy name did bear,
 Oft was committed to thy care,
 Resigned to thy sole dispose,
 To whom each one submission owes. 120
 Thy grace was fought to crown his days,
 To fit him to shew forth thy praise,

sulting the 48th sermon of his *Messiah*. Be this, however, as it may, without doubt, believing parents have good reason to entertain the best hopes with respect to their little ones who are called hence by death; for the promise is to them and their children; which should powerfully induce all Christian parents to give diligence to make their own calling and election sure.

To dwell for aye before thy throne,
 Still blest'd and owned as thine own.
 For this dear gift we praises give; 125 }
 In hope thou didst his soul receive,
 And that with thee he shall still live. }
 Thanks, Lord, we owe to thee on earth,
 Thanks in the gloomy vale of death,
 Eternal thanks before thy throne, 130
 Who as a son this pledge didst own.
 Hast thou him washed with thy blood,
 And made him fit to dwell with God?
 His soul thence raised to the sky,
 T' enjoy there immortality, 135
 Complete in ev'ry grace divine,
 And in thy image bright to shine?
 Why should we then give way to tears,
 Indulge desponding vexing fears?
 God but transplants to yonder skies, 140
 Transplants to bloom in Paradise,
 As precious trees of righteousness,
 Adorn'd with fruits of richest grace;
 To share immortal honours there,
 With which earth's honours can't compare, 145
 Unfulled treasures, ne'er to waste
 While everlasting ages last.
 There, dear lov'd babe, there serve thy God,
 While rais'd to dwell in his abode:
 Him blest who takes from evil days, 150
 Shields from each harm in his embrace,
 Still acts the kindest Parent's part,
 Wipes off each tear, and cures each smart!
 Extol his grace who spar'd thy toil,
 By calling from this barren soil, 155
 Before the scorching heat of noon,
 Yea ere the early dawn was gone.

While

While here to others tempests roar,
And billows hide the wish'd-for shore,
Thou art arriv'd at that blest port 160
Where human woes cannot resort,
Where storms and tempests ne'er can rise,
So mild their clime, so fair their skies.
When the great Judge of all shall come
To summon mankind to their doom, 165
Millions shall wish their mortal state
Had been contracted to thy date.

Thro' grace may we these paths pursue,
While days are lent; at most but few,
That so when these come to a close, 170
Heav'n may this tender plant disclose
To our transported-ravish'd eyes,
Fair as a flow'r of Paradise.

There may we share sweet social bliss;
And fold thee in our fond embrace; 175
Walk 'midst the bow'rs of Eden fair,
And there still breathe ambrosial air;
To the pure streams of life resort,
Still dwellers in our Father's court,
There to unite in Jesus' praise, 180
And share his love thro' boundless days,
Reclin'd beneath his friendly shade,
And in his favour happy made.

Ye pious Parents, check your tears,
Nor once give way to vexing fears, 185
Such strokes may wound your feeling heart,
Yet to your Dears new joys impart.
Tho' death may pluck them from your arms,
They still possess immortal charms;
For while they sleep beneath the clod, 190
The conscious part still rests with God.

An

ESSAYS IN POETRY.

An ODE on the same.

I.

DEAR Babe, of late
 To this frail state
 Of pain and trouble hast thou come;
 Of these did taste,
 Then fled in haste
 To quit this vale, and reach thy Father's home.

II.

Thy days, so few,
 Like morning dew,
 Or fleeting shade, did quickly pass;
 Thou budding flow'r,
 Child of an hour,
 Sprung fair, yet drop'd soon like the tender grass.

III.

At close of day,
 The sun's bright ray
 Beheld thee fair in blooming life;
 Ere morn arose
 This op'ning rose
 Was nipp'd by death, call'd from this world of strife.

IV.

Thy fun did set,
 Thy day retreat,
 While mid-night gloom did veil the sky;
 Yet Christ was there,
 Of thee took care,
 And rais'd thy soul to realms of light on high.

V.

From the vast main,
 A num'rous train

Of

Of thronging waves still onward roll;
 They reach the shore,
 Then are no more,
 The beach at once does all their pride control.

VI.

So our frail race
 Each other chace,
 And for a time our head we rear;
 Once reach'd the bound
 Where fate is found,
 And then we fall, and break, and disappear.

VII.

Life, ah! how short!
 The seeming sport
 Of winds and waves by which we're tost;
 Like Autumn-leaves,
 Into our graves
 We drop, and throng, like wrecks, death's pa-
 lid coast.

VIII.

More oft we die,
 From this state fly,
 While life's short dawn scarce yet appears;
 Yield our fleet breath,
 Return to earth,
 Have our age measur'd by few days, not years.

IX.

Such was thy fate,
 Thy infant state,
 Dear little creature of a day!
 Mow'd down by death,
 Lodg'd in the earth,—
 From this vain world remov'd so soon away.

X. Scarce

ESSAYS IN POETRY.

X.

Scarce did our hope
 Begin to ope,
 This branch to promise future fruit,
 Than death's cold hand
 Did loose life's band,
 His stroke quick level at the tender root.

XI.

Cut off from earth
 By tyrant death,
 Who number'd thee among his slain,
 Hath seal'd thine eyes—
 Lo! here he lies,
 T'augment that gloomy monarch's silent train.

XII.

Yet in this vale;
 Where fears prevail,
 A spring of heav'nly comfort flows;
 There Christ once lay,
 Bright Orb of day!
 And hence the grave's a bed of sweet repose.

XIII.

Dear Babe, there lie,
 Till th' orbs on high
 Have run their rapid destin'd rounds,
 When Christ will say,
 Rise, come away,
 And dwell with me beyond these scanty bounds.

XIV.

His pow'rful charm
 Can death disarm,
 The dead's long silent slumbers break;
 To whom he'll say,
 With might, one day,
 Arise to light, from your long sleep awake.

This

XV.

This hope still cheers,
Shall banish fears,
And smooth the rugged path of death;
This hope gives joy
Death can't destroy,
Tho' that may cut life's slender thread—our
breath.

XVI.

Bless'd be that hand
Which from this land
Of sin and sorrow takes his own—
Takes children home
From ills to come,
To share a kingdom, and to wear a crown?

XVII.

Our God and King,
Thy praise we'll sing,
Whose word and promise ne'er can fail!
Whose faithful word
Stands on record,
To feed our hope and joy in this bleak vale.

XVIII.

Dost thou remove,
Sure 'tis in love,
Our little Dears from our embrace!
They live to thee,
Shall with thee be,
For aye completely blest before thy face.

XIX.

Though death us part,
Thus wound our heart,

Sure

ESSAYS IN POETRY.

Sure it can't keep these from our arms;
 The day shall come
 When we, brought home,
 Will find them cloth'd with more than mortal
 charms.

XX.

Your sorrows spare,
 Drop vexing care,
 Ye mourners o'er your children young;
 Cut off from life,
 This vale of strife,
 And learn by faith to mix your grief with song.

XXI.

Your pious cares,
 And fervent pray'rs,
 Shall not be lost, nor spent in vain;
 For these God hears,
 Regards your tears,
 And will reward both with immortal gain.

XXII.

His blood Christ spilt
 To purge their guilt—
 Their native guilt, and make them white as snow;
 In his robes clad,
 So bright array'd,
 They'll shine in glory while eternal ages flow.

REFLECTIONS on MAN in the concluding scene of life.

1 O N yonder couch a Brother lies,
 The fatal hour at hand;
 Nor is like from that couch to rise,
 For life hath reach'd its strand.

- 2 His lease thereof now at a close,
With all its scenes quite fled;
Far other objects now disclose,
And point him to the dead.
- 3 His spirits to the heart retreat,
And death is gaining ground;
So that his pulse forgets to beat,—
He's listless to each sound.
- 4 On his eye-lids death's shadow dwells,
That dread terrific king;
With throbs his bosom sinks and swells,
While nought relief can bring.
- 5 His lab'ring lips death seems to seal,
All quiv'ring, faint, and pale;
For not one thought can these reveal,
And ev'ry sense doth fail.
- 6 Mists spread before his swimming eyes,
Each object disappears;
A clammy sweat all o'er doth rise,
While friends are drown'd in tears.
- 7 His frame throughout is failing fast,
And drawing nigh the grave;
Beneath the rod it can't long last,
No human skill can save.
- 8 The lamp of life, now nigh gone out,
Is brought so very low,
That each spectator is in doubt,
If one blaze more it know.
- 9 In vain the soul shrinks back from death,
For now his work is done;

In vain the lungs still pant for breath,
For ah! the battle's won:

10 Now all the scenes of life are past,
Its idle tale all told:
By death the eyes are sealed fast,
Nor shall again unfold.

11 Lord, what is man! a frame of clay,
To blend soon with the dust;
What this frail creature of a day!
That in him we should trust.

12 How soon is he laid very low!
His boasted greatness fled,
Which is at best an empty show,—
What then to him who's dead?

13 To him this show is now no more,
Far other cares employ;
Life's pleasures and pursuits are o'er
Nor once give pain or joy.

14 Of this clay house how weak the wall!
Tho' we it daily prop
Soon into ruins must it fall;
Of life how vain the hope!

15 Ah! should this house in ruins sink
Before our peace is made,
How must the soul stand on the brink;
All trembling and dismay'd!

16 Sad, when the falling crash it hears,
Must on the ruins tread;
While these rush down about its ears,
No where to lay its head!

- 17 The Author of our dying frame
Oft warns the same to quit;
Bespeaks us daily, as by name,
Our end not to forget.
- 18 When death a neighbour's door unlocks,
And we attend his bier;
Mean-while at ours he also knocks,
And says,—I'll soon be here.
- 19 Behold, frail man, with awe profound,
The fatal scyth of death;
And hear his warning knell still found,—
Prepare to yield your breath!
- 20 The sun, that soon will set in night,
May light to your last bed;
Yea, not once more to you give light,—
Death's curtains round you spread.
- 21 Soon will the grave your corse receive,
Eternity your soul.
The serious truth, O but believe,
Nor act once more the fool!
- 22 Who so is wise will sure prepare
For his approaching end;
And make a future world his care,
While mercy space doth lend.
- 23 The present state if once but o'er,
That space is wholly past;
Then mercy shall invite no more,
While endless ages last.

ESSAYS IN POETRY.

THE AUTHOR'S WISH.

BLEST JESUS, whom we should adore,
 Whose grace is an exhaustless store,
 Whose goodness claims our grateful praise,
 Whom we should own in all our ways,
 This weak Essay to serve thy cause,
 And to enforce thy righteous laws,
 I humbly, Lord, devote to thee,
 O may it by thee owned be!
 Both strength and praise thou can'st ordain
 From mouths of babes—from weakest means
 From heav'n thy pow'ful grace command;
 To bless these sheets reveal thine hand;
 O make them to subserve thy praise,
 And thence a tribute do thou raise...

E I N I S.

10 EE 60

